

THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
AN EVANGELISTIC SUNDAY SCHOOL AT  
TABERNACLE BAPTIST CONGREGATION

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## ABSTRACT

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation came into existence in November 1997.

Throughout the years several ministries have been created. Many church leaders have been trained to help the Senior Pastor carry out the church's daunting task. Each ministry has a leader in charge.

Preaching and teaching the Word of God are the cornerstone of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. Christian education is for the church what water is for a fish. Sunday School plays a vital role in the church's programs.

However, Sunday School evangelism has so far been neglected. Can Tabernacle Baptist Congregation have any potential for spiritual growth without the promotion of the Great Commission? The promotion of Sunday School evangelism at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation would enable the author of this thesis project to respond. A congregational profile will enable the author of this thesis project discover the challenges that this church is facing in promoting Sunday School outreach. This congregational profile will also enable the author to find the causes of this systemic problem.



## INTRODUCTION

The church has an essential ministry based on God's plan for his people (Lev 20:26; 1 Pet 1:14-16). This ministry is ingrained in Christ's commission to the disciples to go throughout the world and preach the message of God's salvation. The church has one goal: to worship God. It has one purpose: to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19) by leading men and women to conform to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Through the centuries God has revealed himself in people's lives in the Church, which is the primary institution envisioned by his Son, Jesus Christ. Sadly, many churches seem to exist today only to entertain their audience. Spiritual growth and the development of a personal relationship with Jesus seem to be empty words to these churches.

On November 16, 1997, the vision to start Tabernacle Baptist Congregation was prompted by the need to make disciples among the Haitian immigrants in the Greater Boston area. A competition for membership and a lack of zeal for spiritual growth have caused many Haitian church leaders to overlook the necessity of discipleship. Many come to church to serve in various ministries without a clear understanding of the meaning of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. It took Tabernacle Baptist Congregation many years to realize that Jesus' concern was not simply with spiritual activities, but with reaching the multitude by making disciples. As in normal physical growth, in our spiritual growth it takes time to go from spiritual infancy to maturity.

After a long look at the ministries at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, I began to view the Sunday School ministry through the lens of the Great Commission. The idea for

developing an evangelistic Sunday School was conceived during my years of residency in the Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

There is a cliché, “Bloom where you are planted.” This old saying could be applied to Sunday School evangelism, which is often misconstrued and neglected by many Haitian church leaders due to a lack of educational and experiential background in Sunday School evangelism.

How could we expect any ‘bloom’ in the area of Sunday School evangelism if we do not plant the seed of the Great Commission? This is the burning question that caused me to pause and reflect. The goal of this thesis is to promote a Sunday School plan at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation that seeks to apply the outreach concepts taught in the Outreach and Discipleship Doctor of Ministry track at Gordon-Conwell. The methodology of the Sunday School ministry will be evaluated in an effort to make sure that Sunday School becomes an effective outreach tool.



## CHAPTER ONE

### A PROFILE OF SUNDAY SCHOOL AT TABERNACLE BAPTIST CONGREGATION

After Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, many years passed before his followers left Jerusalem to spread the Gospel. They did not voluntarily leave Jerusalem. Persecution forced them to flee Jerusalem.

These events seemed to be orchestrated by God, who wanted the disciples of Jesus Christ to bring the Gospel of salvation to the lost throughout the world. Perhaps God had to bring a storm into their lives in order to blow them from the comfort zone of spiritual activity in Jerusalem. The same scenario could happen again today if church leaders keep neglecting the mandate of the Great Commission.

Today, many mega churches have experienced a consistent surge of numerical growth. The pressing issue of adding new members instead of adding new disciples constitutes a major setback for the Church.

In the book *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church*, a group of researchers conducted a survey of hundred of churches in America. The results concerning evangelism and discipleship were alarming and heart breaking. The results revealed that, "Only 4 percent of the churches in America meet our evangelistic criteria. In 96 percent of our churches the typical layperson cannot identify at least four of the purposes for which the church exists! This statistic is frightening."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 143.



Still, it was encouraging to learn that Sunday School was pivotal to the assimilation of new believers within these churches. It was good to know that the churches that the researchers surveyed did not neglect Sunday School. At Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, teaching the Word of God has become one of the cornerstones of the church. Sunday School and Bible study have played a vital role in the Christian education program of the church.

During the last five years, the church membership has grown at a slow pace. Sunday School could become a growth tool for Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. In order for Sunday School to become a growth tool for the church, it must be evangelistic; otherwise it will simply be an organization. Sunday School must be both an “organism” and an “organization”. If the pastoral staff and Sunday School emphasize evangelism, it is possible that Sunday School, as an institution, will acquire the same emphasis. The Chinese proverb says, “The journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”

Throughout the years, many Sunday School teachers at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation have made a great impact on the lives of many students. Sunday School offers a great training ground for making disciples. It is at Sunday School that people get to know each other better. If the Sunday School ministry is treated as a second-class citizen, the church will pay the price. It will become spiritually anemic. Sunday School can be a tool for reaching out to every member in the church on a regular basis. This can be done by email, telephone calls, personal fellowship times, and home visits, just to name a few.

A well-balanced Sunday School incorporates teaching, discipling, ministering, and fellowshiping. Sunday School can become a place where durable relationships are

*This information is taken from the Sunday School Annual Report 2009-2010.*



developed and people become more connected to the church. Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has experienced some spiritual growth through Sunday School. However, the Sunday School ministry must do more to promote the Great Commission. Chapter Four of this thesis will outline a plan to promote Sunday School evangelism at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

### **Sunday School Profile**

The Sunday School ministry at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has three departments: 1) the Children's Department, 2) the Youth Department, and 3) the Adult Department.

#### **The Children's Department**

It is a great challenge to *raise* a child in this postmodern world. The challenge is even greater when it comes to evangelizing a child. Many experts in Christian education have developed many materials and strategies to ingrain the Word of God into children's minds. As of September 2009, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has 182 children enrolled in Sunday School from pre-school to sixth grade.<sup>2</sup> A group of Sunday School teachers is committed to teaching the Word of God to these children.

A dedicated teacher is now in charge of the Children's Department. She is articulate and thoughtful. She has a great impact upon the children. Each class has a teacher and a substitute teacher. With the acquisition of new classrooms, the Children's Department will be able to operate in small group settings very soon. Each class will have no more than sixteen children. The teacher and his/her substitute will have to teach only

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<sup>2</sup> This information is taken from the Sunday School Annual Report 2009-2010.



eight students. It will be easier for evangelistic teaching to be effective within a small group setting. Teachers usually come early in the morning to welcome the students and gather in prayer with them before the class session.

Some statistics reveal that the majority of children brought up and led to Christ in the Sunday School remain in the church and continue to show signs of spiritual maturity in the Lord throughout the years. Having so many children enrolled in the Children's Department is another floodgate of God's blessing to Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. The church has recently gained new converts among the children.

The Children's Department has a leader who is responsible for getting in touch with parents. She arranges open house meetings in which parents are advised how to help their children in their spiritual journey. Some parents allow their children to invite their friends to come to Sunday School. This is a great way to promote Sunday School outreach.

There are different things that motivate children to come to Sunday School. Some come because their parents force them to come. Others show up because they enjoy the Sunday School fellowship. Many of them attend Sunday School because of a genuine desire to study the Word of God.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the promotion of God's Word to our children, they still have to deal with the problem of vulnerability. The church must help parents "train up a child in the way they should go," so that when the children are older, they "will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6).

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<sup>3</sup> These observations are based on the author's personal conversations with children.



Sunday School evangelism has the potential to greatly impact our children for years to come. Jesus commanded his disciples to let young children come to him (Mark 10:14). He blessed the little children that had been brought to him.

### The Youth Department

A youth pastor leads the Youth Department. He became an ordained minister on January 18, 2009. He has demonstrated his love for God, and he is a caring pastor. He enjoys teaching college age students. He also conducts a Bible study for them each Saturday morning. He is a great asset to Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. The Youth Department has 98 youth enrolled in total.<sup>4</sup> It is not surprising to have over 100 youth, because they invite their friends to come to Sunday School.

When more space becomes available for the youth, the classes will be divided into small group settings. It is essential for Sunday School teachers to be committed to evangelizing to the youth. My goal is to see our young people become both disciples and disciplers. Sunday School teachers need to be on their knees in prayer on behalf of the youth. During training sessions on September 2009, the teachers of the Youth Department were instructed on how to build closer relationships with the youth. For example: the teacher needs to make an effort to learn information about each youth—their names, addresses, phone numbers, birthdays, schools, and career choices. Some teachers counsel youth regarding family relationship and spiritual issues.

One teacher, with the consent of the parents, recently invited a group of young people to spend a weekend with her own children. Some young people who were born in Haiti have experienced difficulties being accepted by those who were born in United

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<sup>4</sup> Sunday School Annual Report 2009-2010.



States. It usually takes them time to adjust to the American lifestyle. It also takes them time to learn how to get along well with other Sunday School students. Some difficulty is due to language barriers. This kind of problem is common to many immigrant cultures.

The teachers are well aware of the spiritual challenges facing the youth. They spend time in prayer with the youth before each class session. During the Summer of 2009, the youth pastor, along with other youth leaders and Sunday School teachers organized a retreat for our Sunday School teenagers. This retreat had an evangelistic overtone. A spiritual awakening took place at that retreat. Many of the youth came back home as born again Christians. Youth from other Haitian churches and from the community were invited to join them. They were touched by this special event as well.

God, through Sunday School, has changed the lives of many young people who struggle with emotional issues. One father was happy to welcome one of his sons into the family of God during a church baptism service on November 14, 2008. The youth Department has a long journey ahead, but this department seems to be on the right path. The author of this thesis has taught the youth on occasion. In his teaching he has challenged them to go to their families, their schools, and their neighborhoods to share the gospel to anyone who will hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

by family and friends, the importance of Sunday School is magnified. The adult Sunday School department is one of the

### The Adult Department

The Adult Department of the Sunday School plays a vital role in the church in term of membership. The church has 255 adult church members enrolled in Sunday School,<sup>5</sup> and 148 who are not enrolled in Sunday School. Therefore, the church has 63% of its members who participate in Sunday School activities, while 37% remain inactive.

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<sup>5</sup> Sunday School Annual Report 2009-2010.



Even some of those who are not enrolled in Sunday School, attend classes once in a while. The Christian education leadership has a plan to divide the adult classes into small group settings at the beginning of 2010. In the Adult Department, people are gathered according to their age bracket from young adults to seniors.

The church has a total of 535 people enrolled in Sunday School (including children, youth and adults).<sup>6</sup> As Department Director of Sunday School, the author of this thesis plans to use teachers, class outreach leaders, and class group leaders to reach out to those church members who are not enrolled in Sunday School. The adult church members do not come to Sunday School with empty hearts and minds. They come to the Sunday School classes with a reservoir of experience and knowledge. They tend to respond to the lessons in the context of their own life situations.

Some adults who attend Sunday School are not officially enrolled in the system. Most of these prospective class members have a genuine desire to study the Word of God. The development of small groups will enable the Sunday School ministry to reach out to them. People in small group settings tend to develop closer relationships with each other. Love is one of the basic needs that persists in people's lives. Like any other age group, the adults desire a sense of belonging. When this need for belonging is not filled by family and friends, the importance of Sunday School is magnified. The adult Sunday School department is one of the best places to promote relational evangelism.

During a recent training session on Sunday School evangelism in July 2009, the teachers were warned to not to do anything that could undermine the effectiveness of the Gospel. They were trained to pay attention to any window of opportunity to help unsaved adults trust Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. People in the Adult Department

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<sup>6</sup> Sunday School Annual Report 2009-2010.



invite family members and friends to their Sunday School class. Some of them have become members of the church. What takes place in this department could be reflected in our families and in our relationships with other people.

There are many Haitian churches in Greater Boston, serving thousands of Haitian people. Rev. Soliny Vedrine serves as Program Director of the Fellowship of Evangelical Haitian Pastors of New England. This organization strives to build relationships among Haitian pastors and churches in Greater Boston and surrounding communities. It is a daunting task due to misunderstandings that develop between denominations and various Haitian subcultures. To its credit, this organization sponsors an interdenominational Haitian Crusade in Boston each year during the Summer.

### **Brief Community Analysis**

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is located in Roslindale in the heart of the city of Boston. Roslindale was annexed to the City of Boston in 1873. It is even today one of the largest communities in Boston. Almost 8% of the church members of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation live in the area of Roslindale. The church has 403 adult members as of 2009. The congregation averages more than 700 people per Sunday, youth and children included. They come from 38 communities. Brockton supplies 19% of the church population. It is only second to Hyde Park with 20%.<sup>7</sup> Church members who live in Roslindale seem to be undisturbed by the surge in crime that accompanied the economic downturn of 2009. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the median sales price for house

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<sup>7</sup> This information is based on the Tabernacle Baptist Congregation Prayer Group Division Report as of August 16, 2009.



in Roslindale rose from \$260,000 to \$290,000. The median household income was \$34,211.00, and the per capita income \$14,918.

In 2003, Roslindale experienced a significant shift in demographics. According to the U.S. Census and the City of Boston, Roslindale's population increased by 5% in the 1990's, with large increases in the black and Hispanic populations, but a decline in the white population. The total minority population has shifted significantly at the end of the last century, from 3,057 in 1980 (9% of total) to 7,465 in 1990 (23% of total) to 15,301 in 2000 (44% of total). The African American population increased from 4% in 1980 to 16% in 2000, while the Hispanic populations increased from 4% in 1980 to 20% in 2000.<sup>8</sup>

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is well established on the American Legion Highway, the second largest commercial area in Roslindale. The American Legion Highway hosts many businesses along with ample parking facilities. People from all walks of life and from different communities come to the strip-mall to do their shopping.

During the weekend, many people from Tabernacle Baptist Congregation go to these stores to do their shopping. This commercial area offers a golden opportunity for the church to reach out not only to the Haitian people who come to the strip mall but also to people from different cultures as well.

Church members who shop at the strip mall have opportunity to invite shoppers to visit their church. For example, in August 2009, I spoke to an African American woman who lives in Roslindale. She came to my church's worship service. After the church

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<sup>8</sup> Heart of the City Project, "Roslindale," Database of the Greenspaces and Neighborhoods in the Heart of Boston, <http://ksgaccman.harvard.edu/hotc/displayplace.asp?id=11515> (accessed October 16, 2010).

worship service, I had a window of opportunity to invite her to the church campaign on evangelization that took place at the end of the month.

Although Roslindale has many churches of different denominations, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is so far the only church located on the American Legion Highway. The church has only one family who actually lives *on* the American Legion Highway in a half-mile radius of the church. The majority of the church members in Roslindale live in a radius of four to five miles from the church. They actively participate in Sunday School activities and their children enjoy being part of the Sunday School as well.

It is a great challenge and also a great opportunity for Tabernacle Baptist Congregation to reach out to people living in its surrounding community by crossing racial barriers, while affirming ethnic and cultural differences. Through its Sunday School ministry, God can use Tabernacle Baptist Congregation to bring his blessing to every aspect of people's lives in their community. The Sunday School Children's Department organizes weekly social event on Fridays, giving a perfect opportunity to invite other children in Roslindale to join them and have fellowship together. The Youth Department has a similar opportunity to invite others to join their weekend social events. It is important for Sunday School leaders to get involved in promoting this kind of outreach ministry. Christian communities thrive on a holistic ministry engaging the whole fiber of their being.

### **History of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation**

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation was founded on November 16, 1997 with the mission of reaching the Haitian community of Greater Boston. Some were very excited



about the new church, while other Haitian believers tried to dissuade people from joining the new congregation. Although this new congregation had difficult times at its beginning, it has many reasons to celebrate God's blessings during its first decade.

The Senior Pastor established this new church, in part, to respond to the mandate of the "Great Commission." The congregation has developed many venues to fulfill this mandate: Bible study, Sunday School, expository preaching, radio broadcasting, TV ministries and internet services.

During the last decade, the pristine holiness of God has been the dominant talk among the church members. The holiness of God and his glory in his church still remain the standards against which the church needs to be measured. The Senior Pastor, Jean A. Alexandre, looks forward to seeing this kind of reverence for God's holiness passed on to the next generation of worshipers.

At the beginning of this church's foundation, some observers wondered about its future. Some skeptics thought that this new congregation would cease to exist within two years. Others argued that the new members would not be on board with the Senior Pastor every step all the way. They were wrong in their assumptions. Jesus says, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots" (Matt 15:13). Those critics had failed to understand that God's church is not merely a human undertaking. A pipeline of gifted Christian believers has continued to flow into the church's ministries.

The establishment of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation caused some concern among other Haitian church leaders because of the fierce competition for membership among many churches in the Haitian community. This market-driven mentality has



created a careless attitude towards the spiritual growth of their congregants among some church leaders. This kind of competition is counter-productive to the mandate of the "Great Commission."

It has been sad to see people coming to church serving in various ministries without any clear understanding of the church's mission. From my observations, many churches in the Haitian community in Massachusetts are full with congregants, but not necessarily full of disciples. I have taught and preached in some of these Haitian churches, and unfortunately, I have witnessed many controversies and disagreements among Haitian church leaders.

Before the establishment of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, the Senior Pastor preached and conducted seminars at many churches in the Haitian community. He served as a guest speaker on many occasions during revivals or conferences held within the Haitian community. His expository preaching and his teaching have resonated in the hearts of many believers in the community. He has a phenomenal ability to connect with his audience. Many were elated at the news of the start of this new church.

After the inauguration of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, hundreds of Haitian believers surged forward to worship God in a way that they perceived has brought glory to God's holiness. People from all walks of life have attended worship services and other spiritual activities. Many of them became members of the congregation. Today, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is a well established church. Started in 1997, this church grew from just over 100 to over 500 in attendance during the first seven years of its existence.

<sup>1</sup> This information is based upon the number of chairs occupied during the Sunday morning worship services.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Humphill and R. Wayne Jones, *Growing on Evangelical's Sunday School* (Nashville TN: Good and Beautiful Press, 1989), 54.



From 2004 to 2009, with the acquisition of its new building, the church grew to an estimated 750 people in attendance.<sup>9</sup> Some of these new attendees were the product of Christian “recycling”. The Senior Pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation had been accused of so-called “sheep stealing,” but many of these “sheep” seemed to have been neglected, and were lacking spiritual maturity.

The accusation of sheep stealing had been for years the dominant talk of some Haitian believers in the surrounded communities of Boston. This church went through a season of misunderstanding. If the sheep were well fed, how could they be stolen? I believe that most of the “recycled” believers were either inactive Christians or were neglected by their church leadership. In *Growing an Evangelistic Sunday School*, Hemphill and Jones argue, “The church that comes alive and begins to grow through an active program will attract some of these sheep that are running wild in the street. Bringing neglected sheep back into the fold is not sheep stealing. Our concern must be for the kingdom of God and individuals.”<sup>10</sup>

The new congregation had to swim against the tidal wave of a negative campaign against it. This painful experience has been finally overcome. Today many people tend to demonstrate a positive attitude toward this church. It is encouraging to see so many people worshipping God on a weekly basis. About 22% of those worshipping do not belong to the church. The potential for evangelization is enormous.

Today, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is by far one of the largest churches in Boston’s Haitian community. It seems only second to the First Haitian Baptist Church

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<sup>9</sup> This information is based upon the number of chairs occupied during the Sunday morning worship service.

<sup>10</sup> Ken Hemphill and R. Wayne Jones, *Growing an Evangelistic Sunday School* (Nashville TN: Broadman Press, 1989), 54.



which was established in Boston in 1969. Most of the Haitian churches gather less than 600 people for worship on a weekly basis (see Appendix B). Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has experienced a steady influx of new members. Right now, it has an estimated 750 people worshipping God together on a weekly basis. For special events, this congregation tends to accommodate more than one thousand people.

Community level.

### **Ministerial Development of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation**

The church has sixteen major ministries. These ministries enable the church to better articulate and refine its vision. The main focus of these ministries is to equip the saints for the work of service by unity of faith in the Son of God. Every ministry is expected to be a reflection of the whole church working together in fulfilling its vision.

I have seen many church members sacrifice time, energy, and even their personal assets to the church. These members want to zealously and joyfully magnify God's name in their congregation and their community.

According to the church's principles, each ministry coordinator must fully affirm the church's doctrinal position and the principles which govern the church body.

Departing from these can lead to disciplinary action and even to the disqualification of the concerned leader from ministering in the church. There is a possibility of restoration, however, if the individual agrees to heed the church's doctrine and principles.

On March 28, 1999, the leadership of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation ordained nine deacons to assist the Senior Pastor in the fulfillment of the church's vision. A few years later one of the deacons moved to Florida and another one to Georgia. In order to fill the vacuum, the Senior Pastor of this church ordained five more deacons on



December 27, 2004. Almost all of the deacons of this church have demonstrated a remarkable spirit of sacrifice for God's work.

By God's grace, most have continued to be good role models. Their faithful service to the body of Christ is priceless. Some of the deacons are Sunday School teachers, while others serve in the administration of the church at the Executive Committee level.

As the church continues to create a welcoming atmosphere, the need to have additional ministries and more spiritual leaders has become urgent. Tabernacle Baptist Congregation now has four ordained pastors. The Senior Pastor oversees the church's activities and makes sure that the church's vision is well articulated. The Assistant Pastor works with the head of Christian education and monitors closely the church's programs.

On January 18, 2009, the church ordained a pastor to be in charge of the youth and college age students. Lastly, another pastor is in charge of evangelization. He joined the church in 2006 after being in charge of many churches in Haiti and Canada. As of May 2010, he has officially become one of the four pastors of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation (see flowchart in Appendix F). Despite their diversity of responsibilities and backgrounds, the pastors have demonstrated unity in the execution of the church's mission.

At Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, every ministry has a coordinator who is not only a spiritual leader but also oversees the activities of the ministry. The coordinators are chosen from those in the congregation who have shown themselves to be prayerful and deeply committed to serving the Lord. Faithfulness and integrity are also dominant qualities that the church leadership is looking for in ministry coordinators.



In order to help a coordinator fulfill his/her duty, the church leadership has set up some basic trainings in ministry. The ministry coordinator often plays the role of a “discipler”. Some coordinators have a large group of believers who work under their leadership. In these cases, personality clashes are inevitable. The coordinator of the ministry might end up intervening in church conflict resolution. The coordinator often provides prayer, counseling, and pastoral care.

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is comprised of believers who transferred from other Haitian churches, originally unchurched people, and from new converts. People from Honduras and Costa Rica have also joined the church. On occasion, people from other cultures come to worship with us. The door of the church remains open to everyone who wants to worship God. The worship service is conducted in Haitian Creole and in English. At the end of each month, the sermon delivery is in English but it is translated into Haitian Creole.

God not only gives to the church his revelation but he also sends ministers to reconcile the community to himself. I believe that this church needs to do more to reach out to its community. It is a great challenge, and also a great opportunity, to reach out to other ethnicities by crossing boundaries of race and economics, by affirming ethnic and cultural differences, and by displaying sensitivity to these differences.

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has a special opportunity to shape the character of its community by engaging in a holistic ministry, combining revivals and crusades, and addressing both social and spiritual issues in its surrounding communities. These activities would enable the church to present Jesus Christ to people who would never come to church otherwise.



If the Haitian churches isolate themselves from their surrounding communities, they will run the risk of mistaking a transformed life for a “quarantined life.” The probing question should be: What good are the Haitian churches doing in their surrounding communities? People in the church’s neighborhood will not comprehend the love of Christ until our outstretched hands demonstrate it.

At Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, each ministry adopts a mission statement reflecting the vision of the church. The guidelines for each ministry stipulate that each group leader must demonstrate in his/her life-style the church’s vision. Every ministry has its own autonomy but they are all interrelated and mutually inclusive. The coordinator of each ministry reports to a deacon advisor. This deacon advisor is accountable to the Head Deacon who reports to the Executive Committee of the church.

Periodically, the pastoral staff evaluates each ministry for the sake of accountability. Once in a while, a coordinator or a staff member may need to be removed from their current position for the sake of the ministry. The church is in a constant state of training and structural evaluation and reorganization. However, constant change could become stressful.

### **The New Structure of Church Leadership**

Since the church’s vision is committed to excellence, an ongoing reassessment of ministries is required. These evaluations are consistent with the church’s vision to ensure its faithfulness in fulfilling the Lord’s mission. After seven years of experience, marked by hardship and errors, the Senior Pastor undertook a reorganization of the ministries of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation in the Fall of 2004. (See Appendices D, E, F.)



Since complacency leads to mediocrity, I believe it is a good thing to constantly do an overall evaluation of the church's ministries. It is our goal that the Lord finds us worthy and says, "I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first" (Rev 2:19).

Perhaps Tabernacle Baptist Congregation's new structure has its own flaws. Still, it facilitates better delegation of responsibilities and encourages the efficient use of our talents as co-workers in ministry. Given the diversity of personalities and callings, bickering is inevitable—even in the church. The new structure has been designed to more clearly articulate the responsibilities of each leader and to whom each leader is accountable. The boundaries are so clearly established that the absence of the Senior Pastor or any pastor does not create any problem for the church to operate.

The church body is led by the Board of Elders, which serves under the leadership of the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor serves as the overseer of the church. The Senior Pastor views himself as a pastor-teacher (Eph 4:11). The Senior Pastor delegates ministerial duties to Elders and Deacons according to their spiritual gifts and Christian character. The Board of Elders is made up of the pastoral staff, the Head Deacon and his assistant, the Chairman (Head of the Executive Committee) and his assistant, and two advisors. All of these individuals are Deacons, except the pastoral staff and one advisor. This board oversees the individual ministries of the church along with the overall administration. The Senior Pastor chose his Board of Elders right after the constitution of the church was implemented. In 2005 this board was modified, adding two Deacon Officers, one of which serves as secretary.

In 2005, the church adopted a new structure comprised of three branches:



1. The Pastoral staff, which is made up of four pastors.
2. The Administrative/Executive Branch, which is under the leadership of the Chairman.
3. The Ministerial /Shepherding Branch, which is under the leadership of the Head Deacon (see Appendix F).

It is amazing to see how these three branches discuss the ongoing spiritual and administrative affairs of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation and how they have functioned effectively together.

The Executive Branch holds meetings on a monthly basis to discuss the ongoing administrative affairs of the church. The Board of Elders is the heart and soul of the church. This board meets only on special occasions to make major administrative and ministerial decisions concerning the church.

The Senior Pastor presides over the Board of Elders' meetings. Sometimes at the discretion of the Senior Pastor, the whole Board of Deacons, the pastoral staff and the Board of Elders may be brought together to make a final decision on certain ministerial or administrative issues.

Under the new structure, the Senior Pastor acts as a "coach" at all Board of Elders meetings. He also supervises the activities of the ministries. It is his responsibility to review decisions made by the different branches.

Under the new structure, there are no significant changes to the duties of the Assistant Pastor. This Assistant Pastor is an ordained minister who graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with a Doctor of Ministry in 2008. The title Associate Pastor would be more appropriate. He supports the ministry of the Senior Pastor. He provides pastoral care and helps the church fulfill its mission and articulate its vision. The Assistant Pastor is responsible for providing training to the leaders of the church, as the Senior Pastor requires.

As previously stated, the Assistant Pastor oversees the ministry of Christian education. In the absence of the Senior Pastor, the Assistant Pastor presides over the Board of Elders. The Assistant Pastor is not authorized to make any final decision in the absence of the Senior Pastor.

The new structural organization also provides a 'clerk' of the Board of Elders. The clerk is a Deacon Officer in the Board of Elders. His role is to keep record of the meetings. He ensures that all church documents are in tune with the church bylaws.

Under the new organization, church leaders (other than the pastors) are appointed for a period of four years. Some leaders may be re-appointed, depending on performance. For example, new leadership was put in place in December 2009. This new team was installed in June 2010, during a special worship. The Sunday School ministry operates within this leadership structure at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

This new structure is not perfect. For example, I think there are too many people in the Executive Branch and on the Board of Elders. Their meetings consume too much time and energy. This organizational structure is not an end in itself. Yet, I believe it is a means to help the church fulfill the "Great Commission."

The whole educational program of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation rests upon the shoulders of this new organizational structure. Could this new organizational structure help in the promotion of Sunday School evangelism? It could as long as this organizational structure is designed to articulate the mission of the church, which is the "Great Commission."

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<sup>11</sup> Hengstall and Joseph, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Hengstall and Joseph, 57.



## **The Challenge of Growing an Evangelistic Sunday School**

### **at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.**

Hemphill and Jones state, "The Sunday School is a growth tool; and, like any other tool, it must be properly used in order to produce satisfactory results."<sup>11</sup> Sunday School is pivotal to the assimilation of new members. The way that churches utilize Sunday School varies. For example, Sunday School has been used as a Christian educational tool at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. There is nothing wrong with this approach. However, the evangelistic aspect has been largely neglected.

How could a greater focus on evangelism breathe life into Sunday School? Sunday School evangelism is a key to promoting growth. Hemphill and Jones state, "The Sunday School functions as a growth tool only when it is energized by the focus on evangelism."<sup>12</sup> So far, the leadership of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation sees the Sunday School's main task as nurturing the believers rather than reaching the unsaved. However, the Good News of salvation is for both believers and unbelievers.

The Word of God tells us, "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:10). Sunday School could be an excellent place for personal evangelism.

Recently, the church has experienced a surge of visitors coming from all walks of life. This is a great challenge for the Director of Christian Education at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation as he directs the flow of visitors pouring into this church family.

Never before has Tabernacle Baptist Congregation seen such a great opportunity to be faithful to the "Great Commission." An ideal place to lead visitors to Christ would

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<sup>11</sup> Hemphill and Jones, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Hemphill and Jones, 57.



be in Sunday School activities. A low priority placed on Sunday School evangelism could be counterproductive to the ministry of the church. Perhaps people might feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. Yet, it is not about them, it is about God. A significant responsibility of the Director of the Christian education should be to promote Sunday School evangelism. It is the collective responsibility of all Christian believers to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost.

As time goes on, as Director of Christian education, I have begun to think more and more about the urgent priority of Sunday School evangelism. I have spent many years training teachers on methodologies on how to become effective Sunday School teachers, but I did not talk about the development of Sunday School evangelism. I used to see Sunday School's primary task as nurturing believers, with little reference to reaching out to the lost. Now the time has come to expand some areas of my calling by reaching out to the lost.

The whole Christian education program of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has been drastically changed since September 2007. I believe that if the church combines the promotion of Sunday School evangelism with welcoming worship services, the church would have vital tools necessary to grow and remain healthy.

The church's new program revolves around the Great Commission. On June 2008, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation organized its first campaign on evangelization. During the church service, many people surged forward at the invitation of the preacher to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. They were called to action, and they responded favorably to that call. They surrendered their lives to Christ. Some of the



church members were emotionally overwhelmed to see an amazing collection of people respond to the gospel.

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has a “Discipleship Training Class” which is led under the umbrella of Sunday School. This class consists of people who want to become members of the church. The curriculum for this class is designed to establish a comprehensive approach to discipleship. I am now convinced that before reaching out to the world for Christ, the believer must first be a genuine disciple of Christ. How can a believer share the Good News with others if he/she has not responded to Good News himself/herself? The “Discipleship Training Class” also touches on basic biblical doctrines. It aims to prepare new members to fulfill the demands of the Great Commission.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, a design for Sunday School evangelism will be explained. It is my hope that if the Sunday School program of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation would adopt this program of evangelism, that the Gospel will take firm root in many lives in a setting of “relational evangelism.” I look forward to seeing the church employ this new directive in our Sunday School. The ministry will need to be evaluated on a regular basis in order to ensure that it reaches its highest potential in evangelism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN TO REACH THE WORLD:

#### THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In our day and age, nothing seems to be able to stop the world's moral decline. Things have the tendency to go from bad to worst. We are living in a global society plagued by a massive moral disaster. The Gospel that offers eternal life is the only genuine antidote to cure the moral gangrene ravaging our society. Sunday School is a good tool for spreading the Gospel. An evangelistic Sunday School can be used as a way of delivering the cure.

As Christians, it is our responsibility to herald the Good News of salvation through Jesus to both believers and unbelievers alike. Christians are called to live with biblical values, but believers around the world are continually faced with the conventional thinking of our time that is often contrary to biblical values. We cannot let the secular progressive agenda deter our core Christian values. The magnitude of this challenge can be heart wrenching, but if the church is to remain faithful to the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) this challenge must be met. Often, it is in the spectrum of Sunday School evangelism that God's kindness leads sinners toward repentance.

Sunday School must bring believers and non-believers to a true understanding of God's plan of salvation. Sunday School's mandate stems from the basic truths described in the Word of God. God ordered the men, women and children of Israel to read and obey the law. Moses instructed Israel:

When all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the



people—men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. (Deut 31:11-12)

This Scripture reveals God's intent not only for the congregation of Israel but also for the Gentile "aliens" living in Israel's midst. Sunday School outreach leaders need to reach out to both those inside the church community and to those outside.

Moses goes on to say, "Their children who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (Deut 31:13). In order for this learning to occur, the next generation must be *taught*. The Apostle Paul asks, "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without preaching to them?" (Rom 10:14). Through Biblical teaching, children will learn to fear God and obey his law. Sunday School ministry with its small group setting offers an ideal place for this learning to take place. It provides an environment in which men, women, and children can be saturated with the basic truths of the Word of God.

It is the parents' duty to live out their faith in God as their children watch and observe their example. Children need to know that God reveals himself and his truth through their parents. Parents are responsible for expounding God's principles to their children so that the children walk in God's ways and develop a vibrant relationship with him (Deut 10:12-13). Both parents and Sunday School teachers must practice what they preach. Both must model with both words and actions, being doers and not only hearers (Jas 2:21-27).

Paul describes the Word of God as the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17). It is through his Word that God reveals his goals and purposes to his Church. Therefore, a



careful study of the Word of God in Sunday School is essential to ingrain the Law of God into the lives of the students.

God wants us to keep his Word in our heart. In his instruction to Israel, Moses teaches:

Josh 1 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your house and on your gates (Deut 6:6-9).

As commanded by God in this passage, the parents of the congregation of Israel had the responsibility to spiritually watch over their own children. Believing parents have carried out this mandate throughout the centuries. When parents treasure God's principles in their own heart, they will be able to impress them on their children and on other people as well. The Psalmist said, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps 119:11).

Joshua When unbelievers and their children are invited to come to church, we have a great opportunity to expose them to the Word of God through expository preaching. However, it is in a small group setting like the Sunday School that difficult doctrines such as the fall of Satan and the fall of humanity can be better articulated. The informal Sunday School setting could help both believers and unbelievers learn difficult truths about God, in a way that preaching cannot. While preaching is a one way of communication, teaching is more interactive. Students can discuss the teaching with their peers and with the teacher. They have the opportunity to ask questions.

Sunday "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov 1:7). The Word of God imparts us with both wisdom and with the



fear of the Lord. The book of Proverbs further teaches, "To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech" (8:13).

God said to Joshua, "Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go" (Josh 1:7). Joshua had led an exemplary lifestyle before his household and before the nation of Israel. He admonished the congregation of Israel to fear the Lord. God empowers his Church to glorify him like Joshua, by living well before the watching world and by equipping the parents and children with biblical training and teaching. Our Sunday School outreach leaders must be able to say like Joshua, "...as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

When parents go to Sunday School, children generally follow them. When Sunday School outreach leaders invite their friends or unchurched people to Sunday School, those unchurched people often accompany their children the next time they visit. Joshua's spiritual nourishment of his household demonstrates that parents could be for their children the link to spiritual nurture. Sometimes it is the children who become the link to reaching unchurched parents.

The Israelites served God throughout the lifetime of Joshua. The Scripture says, "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals" (Judg 2:10-11). Sadly, they failed to make their parents' faith their own. It is a somber story for the nation of Israel. A Sunday School outreach ministry must pass the torch of Sunday School evangelism to the



next generation. Sunday School outreach leaders need to train reliable people who will be qualified to teach and train others. Everyone needs a firsthand faith in God.

The genesis of the gospel can be traced back to the story of the Great Flood (Gen 6-8). Here we see the first demonstration of God's redemptive plan of salvation unfolded when he sent Noah to preach the message of repentance to a wicked generation (2 Pet 2:5). Noah's generation had to be destroyed. Only Noah and his family had found grace before God. The Holy One made the wicked people pay a stiff penalty for their disobedience and unrepentant heart (Gen 9:1-17).

Noah could be considered a great biblical character heralding God's truths. The author of this thesis has found this kind of story disturbing. It is a picture of God's grace. The boat had Noah's family and cute animals in it. But when you think about it millions of people died. This was the result of God's judgment. The earthquake that rattled Haiti on January 12, 2010 is nothing in comparison to the Flood. Sometimes we seem to trivialize this important story of God's judgment, but it is a somber story Noah is a great biblical character that a Sunday School outreach leader can emulate. People of all walks of life need to hear the story of the God of love and justice.

God in His plan of redemption also sent Jonah to be a herald of the message of repentance to the people of Nineveh, the capital of the ancient superpower, Assyria. Jonah the prophet, ran from his mission. Without God's intervention, Jonah would have missed one of the greatest opportunities to witness. The key part of the book of Jonah's message is God's care for Gentiles. Jonah's prejudice had prevented him from comprehending God's will to include the Gentiles in his plan of salvation. Some Sunday School outreach leaders may run risk of making the same error. The Scripture says that,



“The Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph 3:6).

The story of Jonah is often told in Sunday School classes, but most of the time without any evangelistic overtone. Jonah’s prejudice against the Ninivites represents nothing in comparison to God’s anguish over a population on the verge of spiritual destruction. A Sunday School outreach ministry must demonstrate the same sensitivity to the lost both inside and outside of the classroom. The repentance of Nineveh was the greatest evangelistic success recorded in the Old Testament. The success belonged to the Lord rather than Jonah.

Sunday School outreach leaders need a heart that follows the Lord in loving obedience and also a heart full of compassion for the lost. An evangelistic Sunday School may use Jonah’s story to show believers and non believers that there are no boundaries on God’s universal love and mercy. Jonah’s story causes a Sunday School outreach leader to pause and reflect. What would a Sunday School outreach leader be willing to do to share the gospel of salvation to the lost? The Sunday School outreach ministry must have an important role in this crucial area of the church’s mandate.

The Sunday School teachers’ duty is to live out their faith before their classes and before the watching world. They need to remind their students that though we have forsaken God, God has not forsaken us. If we accept by faith Jesus’ atonement for our sin, we will inherit eternal life through Jesus’ death and resurrection. The focus of Sunday School classes should be that God reveals the truth of the atonement to both believers and non-believers. Today we still have time to accept God’s provision and be saved.



The author of this thesis used to see Sunday School ministry as an organization which nurtures believers. The idea of an evangelistic Sunday School was germinated in him during the concepts taught in the Outreach and Discipleship Doctor of Ministry track at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. Ken Hemphill and R. Wayne Jones, co-authors of *Growing an Evangelistic Sunday School* wrote:

Evangelism is the soul of the Sunday School! Without an emphasis on evangelism, the Sunday School loses its central focus, sinks to mediocrity, and simply struggles to maintain the status quo. However, when evangelism is given its rightful place as the focal point of the Sunday School, then we have the finest church-growth tool available today.<sup>13</sup>

A commitment to outreach is lacking in most of the churches in the Haitian communities of Boston. An informal survey of many Haitian churches in the greater Boston area reveals that in these churches, Sunday School is not intended to have an outreach ministry at its core. When Sunday School develops a healthy outreach ministry, growth in attendance and baptisms will be a natural outflow.

Sunday School outreach leaders need to be trained in outreach ministry. These outreach leaders must encourage members of Sunday School classes to invest time and energy in others. These Sunday School members must be well trained to witness to their own family members, friends, and co-workers. They must be sent across their community on a journey to canvass the surrounding neighborhoods.

When the members of the Sunday School catch the vision of reaching out to the lost, baptizing them, and making them the followers of Christ, the result will inevitably be the numeric and spiritual church growth. The unchurched and unbelievers need to be invited to attend the Sunday School classes in order to have the opportunity to get to know others and to build a bridge of friendship with the church members. Sunday School

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<sup>13</sup> Hemphill and Jones, 17.



is one of the best places to build a friendship that has far-reaching benefits. A small group setting such as Sunday School facilitates the growth of relationships between the unbelievers and the believers. Many churches have experienced genuine conversion in Sunday School ministries. Sunday School ministry must, through Biblical teaching, prepare unbelievers to make their profession of faith in God's salvation through Jesus at their baptism.

Without the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ we would believe in vain. The unbeliever needs to understand that the life, the cross, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus are the quintessence of the gospel. Christ's atonement enables unbelievers to have communion with God. The unbeliever who accepts by faith the atonement of Christ will inherit eternal life. Christ plays the role of mediator between the sinner and God. Christ enables forgiveness and reconciliation between God and the unbeliever. Sunday School classes, through their Biblical teaching and activities, could be one of the best places for unbelievers to see on display the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Sunday School ministry must bring believers to a true understanding of God's commandments. Its mandate stems from the basic truths described in God's plan both in the Old Testaments (Deut 31:12-13); and in the New Testaments (Matt 28:19-20; 2 Tim 2:2). It comes as no surprise that non-Christians remain hostile to the gospel. It is an uphill battle; but God's program will prevail. Outreach should be one of the primary objectives of the Sunday School ministry. Dave L. MacDonald in his article,

"Educational Ministry from a Cyclical Interrelational Perspective" wrote that:

When we as believers reach out to touch the lives of others at their point of great need, there is one definite need that we must always keep before us. This one great need is for salvation, for people are still bound by their sin. They need to know the love of God reaching out to them in their darkness. The power of that



love, through the convicting and convincing work of the Holy Spirit will draw them to the Saviour.<sup>14</sup>

The flip side of his argument is: What would happen to those who have rejected God's salvation? The Scripture makes it clear, "Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut from the presence of the Lord..." (2 Thess 1:8-9).

In our Sunday School ministry, believers and non-believers will have to confront their sin by the basic biblical truths of the gospel, heralded by the Sunday School teachers. What is the benefit of coming to Sunday School if the teaching is not about God's love, repentance, and forgiveness of our sin through Jesus? As followers of Jesus Christ, it is our collective responsibility to seek and to save the lost.

Sunday School ministry can become a great channel to spread the gospel in and outside the classroom. It is a place where discipleship can begin because both prospective and current members have the opportunity to hear biblical truths and respond to the gospel. Personal relationships help facilitate evangelism and help in the disciple making process. This small group setting is one of the best ways to build relationships. Jesus had developed a close relationship with his disciples to the point he called them his friends. Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:14-15).

This call to friendship can be developed in a Sunday School setting by loving one another and ministering to one another. Jesus expects his followers to minister to others. New converts need to grow up like babies in their faith in Christ. Concerning the new

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<sup>14</sup> Dave L. MacDonald, "Educational Ministry from a Cyclical Interrelational Perspective," *Christian Education Journal* 7.1 (Autumn 1986): 35.



converts, Peter states, "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Pet 2:1-2).

Our churches are jammed with "born again" Christians but not with genuine disciples. Discipleship is a journey. The congregational implementation of this process requires a strong commitment to the Great Commission. The discipleship process must focus on the spiritual vitality of the disciples. The Sunday School ministry represents one of the best places to build a spiritual vitality that will make an impact on the lives of the congregation. Sunday School teachers need to let the class members know that Christ is the source of their spiritual life. Therefore, they need to stay connected to him. Jesus said to his followers, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4).

It would be an oxymoron to even talk about discipleship without a genuine commitment to Christ. Many congregations have done well in evangelism but have done poorly when it comes to making disciples. A successful Sunday School outreach program will lead to more than class growth. If the Sunday School outreach ministry gives priority to the teaching of Biblical basic truths, to assimilation, to fellowship, and to prayer, the church's mandate to "make disciples" will be greatly expanded beyond expectation.

### **Jesus the Architect of God's Plan of Salvation**

The core of the Christian message is clear and simple: love for God and love for one another. The importance of the personal relationships built in our Sunday School

© Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Deerfield, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 114.



classes between believers and unbelievers cannot be overestimated. When believers and unbelievers hear the gospel in a Sunday School small group setting, a door is opened to the development of God's love among them through their personal relationships. They will be bound by the glue of God's love. When an unbeliever comes to Christ through a Sunday School outreach ministry, the Sunday School small group can become a natural source for spiritual growth.

We are called to love each other as we would love ourselves. On many occasions Jesus Christ demonstrated his love both to his followers and to others who crossed his path. He commanded his followers to love one another. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). Serving people is one of the best ways to demonstrate our love for God.

The Sunday School ministry can become a loving community where fruitful love can be experienced and lived out. We spiritually grow as we love. Greg Ogden in his book *Discipleship Essentials* wrote, "The quintessential quality that defines a disciple of Jesus is love...Jesus has given the world the right to judge whether we are Christians based on the love the world sees among Jesus' followers."<sup>15</sup> The apostle Paul states that, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

We were once incapable of loving. God, knowing our inability to love, "has poured out his love into our heart by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us" (Rom 5:5).

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<sup>15</sup> Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 119.



God's love in our heart gives us the potential to love our worst enemies. The outpouring of love that flows from the Christian's heart is the result of Christ's love growing within.

Jesus, before his ascension to heaven, promised to send the Holy Spirit to his followers. The Holy Spirit was the power that the disciples needed to witness (Acts 1:8; John 16:7-13). On the Day of Pentecost, people in attendance were filled with the Holy Spirit. While they were all in one place, a sound came from heaven like a wind. People who were filled with the Holy Spirit began to speak in foreign languages. It was amazing to see people from different countries and different cultures able to understand the message of the Holy Spirit in their own language. This historical event makes it clear that nothing is impossible for God. It would be an oxymoron to witness without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some people in attendance started mocking those who were filled with the Holy Spirit. According to these skeptics, these people were drunk. Peter explained that what they were seeing was a fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh" (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:14-21). Many people who had witnessed this powerful display of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit remained confused. "They were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter boldly replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:37-38). The same Holy Spirit is still at work today in our Sunday School classes. An evangelistic Sunday School would enormously benefit from the work of the Holy Spirit in the Sunday School teachers' and the students' lives.



The early disciples became witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit they received on the Day of Pentecost. The power of the Holy Spirit enables the Sunday School outreach leaders to witness. The same divine power available to the early church is also available to Sunday School teachers so that God can accomplish his mission to save the world through them. Without this supernatural power it would be impossible to help believers develop their relationship with Christ and do his will. Thom S. Rainer and Chuck Lawless, co-authors of *Eating the Elephant*, wrote, "A church without the power of God is only a business, and prayer is a primary means by which we tap into the power!"<sup>16</sup>

The foundation of the Gospel of Christ rests upon Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. The Sunday School ministry should never depart from this basic biblical truth. This cardinal principle should be at the core of the curriculum of the Sunday School department. The early disciples were devoted to the teaching of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The Sunday School ministry must echo the same message both to prospective and current class members.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has become the center piece of our hope and belief. The one who raised Jesus will raise the followers of Christ as well. The Scripture tells us, "Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence" (2 Cor 4:14). Christopher B. Adsit in his book, *Personal Disciple Making*, wrote that,

Christianity is a *relationship* with God through the auspices of the risen, glorified Savior. It's not really a 'religion', though some people choose to define it as such; it is not merely a code of ethics, though that is involved; it's not a certain collection of behaviors, though as a result of our relationship with God, certain

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<sup>16</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Grow*, rev. ed. (Crestwood, KY: Pinnacle, 2003), 85.



behaviors will come to the fore. At its very foundation it's a two-way, vital, dynamic *friendship* between the Creator and His creature.<sup>17</sup>

The message of Jesus Christ was well articulated and simple: "The time has come," he said. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News!" (Mark 1:15). This is the same message of repentance and belief that our Sunday School teachers need to articulate in class. This simple message has the potential to change people's lives. This statement by Jesus tells us how God through Jesus Christ entered into history for our redemption.

In spite of the death of Jesus Christ and his ascension to heaven, it was impossible for the Jewish leaders and the political establishment of the Roman Empire to stop the early followers of Christ. Jesus had planted the seed of the Gospel in the heart of his followers. Thanks to the apostles' obedience to the Great Commission, and to their life of prayer, the early church kept growing larger and bolder. The followers of Jesus Christ embraced his vision. The same thing could happen in our Sunday School classes. Sunday School class members would follow the path of the Sunday School outreach leaders who embrace Christ's vision. Jesus made it clear to his disciples that they will be his witnesses everywhere.

If the early followers of Christ were able to influence and challenge the negative aspects of their culture, what would prevent our Sunday School ministry from organizing in such a way that would help our churches uproot evil in our society through the lens of an evangelistic Sunday School?

The first century Christians were empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. They preached the Gospel under the Holy Spirit's influence and power. For example,

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<sup>17</sup> Christopher B. Adsit, *Personal Disciple Making* (Orlando, FL: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 243.



Peter's sermon in the book of Acts resulted in 3,000 people becoming Christians. These new believers had fellowship with one another and communion with the Lord. They broke bread on Sunday like many churches do today. The Scripture says, "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). This breaking of bread was either a communal meal or the sacrament of communion. In either case it was a gathering in brotherly love. In Sunday School classes some teachers organize a communal meal before or after class in order to promote fellowship. As a memorial, the Lord's Supper reminded those 3,000 newly baptized believers of what Jesus had done for them. Each time we partake of the bread and drink the wine, we do it in remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection until his return. We must examine ourselves and also our relationship with God before we partake in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:28). The author of this thesis believes that the "snack" or communal meal in Sunday School bears some relationship to the communal meal mentioned in (Acts 20:7).

The fellowship on display among the first century Christians became a dominant topic of discussion in the surrounding communities. Scripture says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). A Sunday School outreach ministry which focuses on these four discipleship principles in its curriculum will inevitably experience enormous spiritual growth. The teaching of basic biblical truths, fellowship, baptizing, and prayer are the spiritual nutrients necessary for a successful evangelistic Sunday School ministry.

Bruce L. Shelley argues, "First-century Christianity was a spiritual explosion. Ignited by the Event, the presence of Jesus Christ, the church hurtled in all directions, geographic as well as social. The second and third centuries provided the channel for this

\* Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 27.



power.”<sup>18</sup> The new Nazarene movement, an offshoot of Judaism, was able to quickly spread around the world due to the apostles’ obedience to the mandate of the Great Commission. They were able to pass Christ’s vision to reliable followers of Christ who in turn passed the vision on to future generations. For example Paul said to Timothy, “the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). A Sunday School ministry, which follows the path of the first century Christians will have a far-reaching effect.

The Early Church Fathers faithfully followed spiritually and morally the path of the first apostles. Their commitment to God loomed as large as the early first disciples’ dedication to God. Christian writers and scholars such as Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Eusebius of Caesarea, Augustine of Hippo, Origen and many others have largely contributed to the promotion of Christianity around the world. All Christian believers should be very grateful for what they did to promote and expand God’s kingdom on earth in spite of severe persecution. The apostles and the Fathers of the Church passed the torch of the Great Commission to future generations; it is up to us to be faithful and pass the torch to the following generations. The early Church Fathers’ accomplishments are beyond the scope of this thesis, but they provide an amazing example for those who embark in the promotion of Sunday School evangelism!

As time changes, virtues and moral values seem to embrace a new meaning for unbelievers. Today, some church leaders have rocked our churches with corruption and crises in morality. Much of the church seems to have lost sight of its identity. Charles R.

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 27.



Swindoll says it well, "our reputation has been tainted by a moral breakdown among not only our members, but our ministers as well. It is time for the bride of Christ once again to reflect the character of her Groom and respond to His leading."<sup>19</sup>

Some of our churches have lost their flavor in a culture that is in its lowest ebb ever. Still, a glimmer of hope constantly shines over God's church, because he is faithful to his promises. A zeal for evangelization burns in the heart of many believers in our churches and around the world despite living in a culture which is hostile to Christian values. A Sunday School outreach ministry could canvass our community to find non-believers who want to turn their life to Christ. Some of them are longing for an invitation to respond to the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Max L. Caldwell, in his book, *Witness to Win*, wrote that, "Sunday School is the church's primary channel for witnessing to people, winning them to Christ and church membership, and involving them in a life of meaningful growth and service."<sup>20</sup> Sunday School can be the ambassador of the church to find the lost. Individual class members can be encouraged to reach out during class sessions as well as outside the class. Class members can be motivated to pray for the lost. Jesus gave the example of prayer not only for his own disciples but also for those who will believe in him. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message" (John 17:20).

It is a blessing for a Sunday School outreach ministry to be the channel through which the divine mandate of the Great Commission flows. The author of this thesis looks

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<sup>19</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, "Introduction," in *The Bride: Renewing Our Passion for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), n.p.

<sup>20</sup> Max L. Caldwell, *Witness to Win: Positive Evangelism through the Sunday School* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1978), 39.



forward to seeing Tabernacle Baptist Congregation's Sunday School becoming the most fruitful Great Commission agency of this church. This is possible only if our chief textbook is the Bible. W. E. McCumber states, "The Sunday School is not teaching truth for truth's sake. The Sunday School is not content to treat the Bible as ancient history, but uses the Word of God to illuminate and inspire contemporary life."<sup>21</sup> A genuine commitment to the Word of God, along with constant prayer, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit will make it possible for Tabernacle Baptist Congregation's Sunday School to become an evangelistic tool for the church. A teaching program, focusing on evangelistic content, will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Like the early followers of Christ, all Christian believers today are called to action. They cannot be passive when it comes to sharing the Good News with the lost. The glorious gospel tells us how God, through Jesus Christ, entered into history in order to effect our salvation. A Sunday School that is not evangelistic in essence runs the risk of faltering. Sharing the Good News both inside and outside the classroom should be a prominent mindset in Sunday School ministry. Paul tells us, "When I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16). Sharing the gospel with the lost drove the Apostle Paul's ministry. He was ready to even lose his own life for the sake of the gospel.

Paul goes on to say, "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might have some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessing" (1 Cor 9:22-23). This is an example for those in ministry to follow. Sadly, many church leaders, including Sunday

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<sup>21</sup> W. E. McCumber, *Everybody into the Field! The Power of Sunday School to Transform Lives through Evangelism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1995), 39.



School teachers, give into the pressure of this age. One of the best ways to follow Paul's example is to develop a zeal for the "Great Commission". This can be done with the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus laid down the basis for the "Great Commission" during his ministry in Palestine. He made it clear to his followers that they were to be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This is the metric that Sunday School outreach leaders can use to develop an outreach mindset in the Sunday School ministry.

Jesus was able to plant the seed of the gospel in the mind of his followers. The Nazarene movement grew larger and bolder day by day. Neither the Roman nor the Jewish leaders were to stop the progress of the gospel. Though Jesus' life was cut short, his legacy has far reaching spiritual benefits for Christian believers. Sunday School teachers and the outreach leaders are in a unique position to plant the seed of the gospel in the hearts of those who come to Sunday School. The class members can reach others in their own spheres of influence. Within their own social network they will be able to identify those who do not know Christ as Savior and invite them to come to Sunday School. Friendship evangelism is a great tool to the development of Sunday School evangelism. Similar 'social networking' led to the calling and discipleship of some of the original Twelve: Andrew, Philip and Nathaniel (John 1:35-51).

As we can see in the above discussion of these biblical passages, an evangelistic Sunday School program can be part of the essential disciple making mandate of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. God works in the lives of both the believers and the lost in the setting of an evangelistic Sunday School. This venue can be a particularly effective way to evangelize and make disciples. For example Elmer L. Towns wrote:



As a freshman in college, Jerry Falwell asked permission of the Sunday School superintendent of a local church to teach a class. Young Falwell received a roll back with one name-a junior boy whose attendance in the past had been intermittent. . . . For three weeks, young Falwell faithfully prepared his lessons and taught his class of one. . . . He asked God to help him make the class grow. . . . Week after week, Saturdays were devoted to visiting the friends of his students to invite them to Sunday School. By the time his first year of college ended, 54 junior boys were in that class. . . . Jerry Falwell, well known pastor, TV preacher and college founder, got his start in ministry by building a Sunday School class.<sup>22</sup>

Elmer goes on to describe Falwell's methodology:

With a single purpose in mind, Saturday morning he picked up his only junior boy and they went to the homes of his one student's friends to invite them to Sunday School. Then they went to the area parks where junior boys played on Saturday to invite all to come to Sunday School. The next day, new boys attended the class. The next Saturday, Jerry repeated the process, taking the new boys out to find their friends.<sup>23</sup>

The author of this thesis used this illustration during one of his training sessions. One of the main reasons for Jerry Falwell's success was his determination to press on in Sunday School outreach ministry. Perhaps those junior boys were in a quest for some spiritual guidance. This illustration shows that Sunday School can be used as an effective tool in spreading the gospel outside the class room. Sunday School teachers, Sunday School outreach leaders, and individual class members are all encouraged to reach out to the lost and unchurched. The Scripture says, "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Sharing the Good News of salvation through the atonement of Christ should be the pressing issue of our Sunday School outreach ministry. Sharing the gospel with believers and nonbelievers is a divine mandate. Through the Sunday School outreach ministry, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation can seek out the lost, build godly relationships with the unchurched, and promote a brotherly love with God

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<sup>22</sup> Elmer, L. Towns. *What Every Sunday School Teacher Should Know: 24 Secrets That Can Help You Change Lives* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), 171-173.

<sup>23</sup> Towns, 171-173.



and with one another. This unique characteristic of a Sunday School ministry is able to make it more appealing to people from all age brackets and all walks of life. During his ministry in the Holy Land, Jesus trained his disciples and sent them out to proclaim the message of salvation. When his disciples returned, Jesus did a post-session assessment (Luke 10:1-24). This is a good example for an evangelistic Sunday School to follow.

**Three** We are living in this age of darkness. Many people are still in a quest for spiritual guidance. Scripture tells us, "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor 4:3-4). Any evangelistic Sunday School will run against the grain of conventional thinking in this age of darkness, but the Scripture says, "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

In this age of moral failure, Sunday School teachers and outreach leaders have a golden opportunity to be a light to those who are walking in darkness. On account of their zeal to promote the "Great Commission" a tidal wave of spiritual awakening could sweep over their churches and over their communities. A season of spiritual refreshing is needed more than ever at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

Why is it important to promote the mandate of the "Great Commission"? Because God "has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Since there is a spiritual blindness that darkens the spiritual eyes of those who deny Christ as Lord and Savior, let us shine with zeal in our churches and in our Sunday School as we promote the "Great Commission".



Chapter Two clearly demonstrates that an evangelistic Sunday School must have a firm Biblical and theological foundation. The methodologies and the philosophy of ministry to develop Sunday School evangelism can be found in a handful of books written on Sunday School evangelism. Insights from those writers and the contribution of this thesis project to the discussion of Sunday School evangelism will follow in Chapter Three.

The survey will focus on books which touch on developing an evangelistic Sunday School by reaching out to people both inside and outside the church. The survey will also examine literature that promotes Sunday School ministry as a pathway to discipleship (a crucial issue in our churches today). The author of this thesis knows by experience the benefits of using Sunday School to assimilate both prospective and current members into church life. Second, the survey will review literature that focuses on building relationships in Sunday School with an evangelistic overtones. These relationships need to be built in a way that has the propensity to lead to numerical growth. The literature will show that one way these relationships can be built is through regular home visitations conducted by teachers and Sunday School outreach leaders. This is a way for Sunday School leaders to share their faith with other believers and with unchurched people as well. During visitation, there are enormous opportunities to talk to people who do not know Christ as their Savior and Lord.

A zeal for God's glory and a strong gratitude for the atonement of Christ are at the center of a deep commitment to the Great Commission. Christians are in the business of winning the lost for Christ, the anchor of our salvation. One of the most relevant issues in the church today is the lack of commitment to preach and watch the Good News of Jesus Christ, who came to the world to offer himself in atonement for our sin.



## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will serve as an overview of the applicable literature in the field of Sunday School evangelism. There are a handful of books written on the topic. First, the survey will focus on books which touch on developing an evangelistic Sunday School by reaching out to people both inside and outside the church. The survey will also examine literature that promotes Sunday School ministry as a pathway to discipleship (a crucial issue in our churches today). The author of this thesis knows by experience the benefits of using Sunday School to assimilate both prospective and current members into church life. Second, the survey will review literature that focuses on building relationships in Sunday School with an evangelistic overtone. These relationships need to be built in a way that has the propensity to lead to numerical growth. The literature will show that one way these relationships can be built is through regular home visitations conducted by teachers and Sunday School outreach leaders. This is a way for Sunday School leaders to share their faith with other believers and with unchurched people as well. During visitation, there are enormous opportunities to talk to people who do not know Christ as their Savior and Lord.

A zeal for God's glory and a strong gratitude for the atonement of Christ are at the center of a deep commitment to the Great Commission. Christians are in the business of winning the lost for Christ, the anchor of our salvation. One of the most relevant issues in the church today is the lack of commitment to preach and teach the Good News of Jesus Christ, who came to the world to offer himself in atonement for our sin.

<sup>11</sup> Darrel W. Robinson, "The Priority of Personal Discipleship," in *Evangelism for a Changing World*, eds. Timothy Beougher and Alvin Reid (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1995), 117.

The wide spread use of technology around the world offers a tremendous opportunity for Sunday School ministry to reach out to non-believers before it becomes too late. Sunday School should never get side tracked from the church's original mission to make Christ known to the world. Today, the concept of "sin" has become an object of contempt for many. The new world order, which is so challenging and detrimental to our core Christian values, seems to be gaining momentum. However, despite all of the challenges facing Christian believers, the mission of Sunday School outreach must not falter.

Darrell W. Robinson in his essay, "The Priority of Personal Evangelism," says, "It takes time to reach people—time to get acquainted, build relationships, share the gospel, and time to lead them to Christ."<sup>24</sup> This "time" taken for Sunday School ministry is vital to the ministry of the church. In Sunday School, people tend to build close relationships, and share the gospel in a warm atmosphere. Sunday School ministry must carry hope to unchurched people who are seeking for something to believe in.

The Sunday School ministry needs to use its outreach arms to invite the unchurched to come to church. Thom S. Rainer sent a research team out to conduct a survey. The research team's mission was to find out what keeps the unchurched people at home rather than going to church. The research team found out that unchurched people stay home for multiple reasons.

The research team stated, "While only one in five U5s indicate they will attend church if invited, a majority of the other unchurched groups will come. More than eight out of ten of all the unchurched said they would come if invited by a Christian. But

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<sup>24</sup> Darrel W. Robinson, "The Priority of Personal Evangelism," in *Evangelism for a Changing World*, eds. Timothy Beougher and Alvin Reid (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1995), 117.



remember, most of the unchurched indicated in our interviews that they were uncomfortable entering a church building by themselves. They were much more likely to attend if someone walked with them into the building.”<sup>25</sup> According to the research team, a U5 stands for an “unchurched 5” person. The research team stated, “A U5 is the most antagonistic to the gospel, to Christians and to the church. As was the case with most of our interviews of U5s, we came away from the interview shaking our heads, wondering if there was any hope for the person.”<sup>26</sup> It is a Christian’s responsibility to invite the unchurched to come to church. Once there, they can introduce them to Sunday School.

For example, in the Spring of 2008, a family of five visited Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. Their visit presented an opportunity to ask about how they discovered the church. They replied that one of the Sunday School teachers had invited them to come, and that they responded to the invitation. They had the opportunity to participate in the Sunday School classes and in the church service as well.

The unchurched are our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers, and family members. They are waiting for believers to introduce them to God’s truths and to share with them the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Even if they do visit, many unchurched would not know anyone in the church. If a Sunday School leader or a member of a Sunday School class invites them, then a friendly face will be there to accompany them in class and throughout the worship service. The visitor will then have the opportunity to talk to other church members. This kind of personal connection opens the door for relationship building. Sunday School teachers and class members can be great tools in spreading the Gospel.

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<sup>25</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2003), 232.

<sup>26</sup> Rainer, 14.



W. E. McCumber states, "Sunday School members are harvesters, and their participation in the harvesting is just as vital as that of any other group of harvesters."<sup>27</sup> As harvesters, Sunday School teachers and members need to be involved in weekly visitation. This enables them to evangelize the unchurched and reach out to non-active members. McCumber goes on to say,

The Sunday School as a field for evangelism is not limited to the walls of the classroom. Many of those whose names are on our "responsibility list" and prayer list will never be reached in a classroom or even in a sanctuary during worship services. If we win them, it will likely be at home, theirs or ours, when shared food and conversation open the door to a direct confrontation with the Savior.<sup>28</sup>

In some unusual circumstances, the Sunday School outreach member may find a window of opportunity to share the Good News outside the classroom. McCumber states, "Sometimes, when we sense that they are 'ripe for harvest,' we can set up an appointment to visit people for the express purpose of telling them about Christ and urging them to make a decision to surrender their lives to Him."<sup>29</sup>

The Sunday School outreach leaders have the great opportunity to do the work of evangelism. Nate Krupp in his book, *A World to Win* states, "Jesus made it clear that every follower of His was to do the work of evangelism. This was the purpose of their salvation (John 15:16), the test of their discipleship (John 15:8), and the expected natural result of following Him (Matt 4:19). Sin was personal, salvation was personal, and so was the Great Commission."<sup>30</sup>

If Sunday School leaders and class members make it a priority to increase the number of home visits, the output would be a continual influx of unsaved people who

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<sup>27</sup> McCumber, 36.

<sup>28</sup> McCumber, 42.

<sup>29</sup> McCumber, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Nate Krupp, *A World to Win* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1966), 15.



come to participate in Sunday School activities. However, they must become class members, otherwise they may stop coming to Sunday School. The new class members are expected to share their new faith in Christ with others. Max L. Caldwell in his book, *Witness to Win*, wrote that, "The desired goal of all Sunday Schools should be to provide a climate where persons are led to discover Christ. But this is not the end! The plan that Christ gave us, the plan practiced in New Testament churches, the plan that still is evident in our churches today is to continue the Christian witness by helping the new believer share his new faith with others. The Sunday School is designed to achieve this goal."<sup>31</sup> The Sunday School class has the potential to experience spiritual growth when outreach efforts are at the core of its ministry. If outreach leaders properly approach Sunday School ministry, disciple making would be the natural overflow. The Sunday School ministry will experience not only a spiritual growth but also an influx of newcomers who have a desire to be enrolled in the Sunday School classes.

Despite the fact that "outreach" is a multifaceted aspect of the church's ministry as a whole, it can be at the core of a dynamic Sunday School ministry. Sunday School classes provide a warm and an open climate in which to draw new members closer to Christ. Sunday School leaders need to minister to newcomers in a way that will enable them to discover Christ for themselves. Max L. Caldwell states,

It cannot be assumed that witness will automatically happen. Department and class leaders must be responsible for seeing that Christians are active in their witness. The members of a Bible study group, expressing love and concern, are in a unique position to witness with sensitivity and with awareness of the Holy Spirit's working in the life of the unsaved person.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Caldwell, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Caldwell, 35.



At the core of his statement is an admonishment to promote an evangelistic Sunday School ministry.

Max L. Caldwell argues that, "*Sunday School workers must go wherever the lost are to be found*. They must go with concern, in a spirit of love, in an effort to cultivate, teach, witness, plead, and pray. *Sunday Schools must visit the lost! Sunday Schools must visit the lost! Sunday School must visit the lost! Sunday School must visit the lost!*"<sup>33</sup>

Max L. Caldwell conveys the urgency of his plea with the use of italics.

Relatives and friends could be a great source of prospective visitors to the Sunday School ministry. D. James Kennedy in his book *Evangelism Explosion*, states, "Another good source of prospects would be the parents of children who attend Sunday school. This source, however, will not prove very fruitful unless Sunday school teachers have had an active program of visiting in the homes and showing an interest in the children's progress in their Christian education. If this has been done the parents will generally open to the Gospel."<sup>34</sup> D. James Kennedy believes that new residents in the community surrounding the church are another good source of prospects for Sunday School ministry. He notes that, "the weekly or biweekly or monthly listing of those who have bought new homes in the area" can aid this task. He goes on to say, "This can be obtained from some source in almost every city. Any real estate salesman in the congregation can usually tell you where to obtain it."<sup>35</sup> Kennedy also goes on to explain:

We begin by sending a friendly letter to these people, welcoming them into the community and offering our services in any way possible. We conclude the letter by stating that someone from the church will drop by in the near future and welcome them personally to our area and to our church. A card is then made out for the visitation team showing the date the letter was mailed and indicating that

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<sup>33</sup> Caldwell, 47.

<sup>34</sup> D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 4th ed. (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1996), 14.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, 14.



the people are new residents in the area. They are then processed in our visitation ministry.<sup>36</sup>

This would be a good paradigm for a Sunday School outreach ministry. Chapter Four will present a clear strategy for promoting a Sunday School ministry with an evangelistic overtone at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

Ken Hemphill, the author of *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur* argues:

The Sunday School must be plugged into a passion for evangelism; otherwise, it will settle into the comfort zone of a maintenance organization. By ignoring the evangelistic potential of the Sunday School, we have reduced Sunday School to a stagnant pool of introverted groups that look primarily to their own needs and interests and ignore the plight of the unsaved.<sup>37</sup>

If Sunday School leaders cultivate an outreach mindset the students will most likely develop the same mindset. Hemphill further states, "Your Sunday School does not have to remain stagnant! It can give your church the most effective Great Commission tool ever designed if it focuses on evangelism and if its purpose statement is clearly understood by all those who work and participate in it."<sup>38</sup>

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is located in an area in which it needs to interact with people from different cultures. Many Christians seem unable to relate to people from different cultures. This has been an impediment for many Sunday School teachers and church leaders as well. This is one of the vital points of Ajith Fernando, the author of *The Christian's Attitude toward World Religion*. The author of this thesis believes that sometimes our spiritual arrogance prevents us from effectively communicating the message of God to people of different cultures.

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<sup>36</sup> Kennedy, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ken Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Hemphill, 15.



Ajith Fernando has significant experience working with those who practice Buddhism and with Asian culture in general. Fernando argues:

Logical argumentation is not the way the Eastern mind generally perceives truth. For example, a brilliant defense of the gospel using carefully reasoned logic might leave a Sri Lankan Buddhist villager totally unimpressed. However, the story of Jesus healing blind Bartimaeus may captivate the Sri Lankan Buddhist villager and make him seek further truth about the compassionate Christ.<sup>39</sup>

Sunday School outreach leaders must be trained in cultural issues in order to connect better to people from different backgrounds.

Fernando also goes on to say, "When we proclaim the gospel, we constantly interact with the aspirations, beliefs and practices of our audience. A good witness, then, is a student of both the Word and the world."<sup>40</sup> The flip side of his argument is the fact that some people may misconstrue the word "world". Lesslie Newbigin, the author of *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* spent over thirty years as a missionary in India. Like Fernando, Newbigin pleads for a genuine dialogue between Christianity and other world religions. This dialogue is not easy due to cultural sensitivities among people. Lesslie senses that the Gospel has been taken hostage by many Christian denominations in the West. This scenario has made the Gospel less appealing to other major world religions and to many godless people as well. Newbigin states, "Jesus had been domesticated in the Hindu worldview...I, too, had been guilty of domesticating the Gospel."<sup>41</sup> While his book is more suited to an audience of academia, there is similarity of confidence in the Gospel of Christ between Ajith Fernando and Lesslie Newbigin. Lesslie argues, "We

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<sup>39</sup> Ajith Fernando, *The Christian Attitude toward World Religion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), 150.

<sup>40</sup> Fernando, 46.

<sup>41</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 3.



must accept pluralism as a reality which God evidently wills.”<sup>42</sup> His statement could be easily misconstrued because pluralism may be coined with different kind of connotations. Pluralism may be a good evangelistic tool as long as it means diversity in unity (1 Cor 1:10).

As previously stated in the first chapter, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is located in Roslindale, a neighborhood that has witnessed a shift in the make-up of its population during the last decade. Most of the people who moved into Roslindale came either from Haiti or from other countries. This dynamic shift has created a great opportunity for Sunday School outreach ministry. The new make-up of Roslindale has brought both socioeconomic downturn and the attendant spiritual challenges that accompany the downturn. The Sunday School outreach ministry bears the responsibility to reach out to those who live in Roslindale. Ray Bakke in his book *The Urban Christian* describes how to conduct an effective urban ministry in today’s world. Bakke lays out the interesting panorama of ministry in Chicago with its social problems, political corruptions at all level of the government, and socioeconomic downturns. Bakke points out that it is the believer’s responsibility to reach out to those who live in the cities. Bakke states, “Urban people want, and hunger for, fellowship which is high quality and lasting.”<sup>43</sup> The author of this thesis believes that the best place for urban people to enjoy high quality, long lasting fellowship would be in Sunday School ministry.

Bakke also argues, “It is only by living in a city, with a theological vision for the city, that we can attempt to reach the city’s people.”<sup>44</sup> The city is like a magnet attracting people from all walks of life. God does care for cities. God sent Jonah to Nineveh during

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<sup>42</sup> Newbigin, 157.

<sup>43</sup> Ray Bakke, *The Urban Christian* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1987), 43.

<sup>44</sup> Bakke, 85.



the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC to preach a message of repentance to the Ninivites. In terms of evangelization to the cities, Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the gospel first to the city of Jerusalem.

A Sunday School class could significantly impact its community for Christ's sake if the Sunday School teacher motivates the class to be involved in outreach ministry. A praying class will greatly impact the life of the Sunday School enrolled members and prospects. Prayer is the recipe for success when it comes to Sunday School outreach. Ed Silvano, the author of *Prayer Evangelism* is an advocate for personal evangelism. His book has great spiritual insights. If Bakke's *Urban Christian* shows how to "set siege" to the city, *Prayer Evangelism* shows how to spiritually invade and capture the city. Prayer can change the spiritual climate of the neighborhood that the Sunday School outreach leaders want to evangelize. Silvano argues, "How we reach a city is by building a canopy of prayer over the entire city—block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood—in order to change its spiritual climate."<sup>45</sup> Sunday School offers a great environment to motivate Sunday School outreach leaders to pray for the people who live in their neighborhoods. Ken Hemphill states, "Sunday School, when designed with a clear evangelistic purpose, becomes a vital integrated church growth tool for today's church. It is simple to use and provides many advantages for churches of any size."<sup>46</sup> Sunday School may grow numerically, but spiritual growth is a divine undertaking. For example, we grow as we meditate upon the Word of God (Heb 4:12; 1 Pet 2:2). We also grow as we pray (Matt 7:7).

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<sup>45</sup> Ed Silvano, *Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000), 130.

<sup>46</sup> Hemphill, 31.



Many churches give little weight to prayer meetings. When the Sunday School ministry gives priority to the Great Commission, it will realize that it would become impossible to fulfill its outreach ministry without divine empowering through constant prayer. Ken Hemphill states, "until we understand the supernatural activity of God, prayer will always be a last resort when all of our programs and planning fail."<sup>47</sup> A focus on the power of the Holy Spirit calls the Sunday School outreach to prayer. Hemphill further states:

The lack of dependence on prayer is a clear indication of our lack of understanding of the nature and character of God. When we come to understand that we are totally dependent and that God is omnipotent, our first priority will be to pray. When a church takes seriously the demand of the Great Commission, it will realize that it cannot faithfully fulfill its purpose statement without divine empowering.<sup>48</sup>

Prayer is a key church growth principle. Paul says to Timothy: "Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers" (2 Tim 1:3). Jesus spent a night in prayer on the eve of the selection of his apostles (Luke 6:12). Since modeling is one of the key elements in teaching, Jesus made prayer the corner stone of his ministry on earth. The early church also followed this model. A growing church is the natural overflow of a praying church.

Ken Hemphill states that there are six principles of Sunday School growth. He argues, "I contend that these six principles of church growth are inherent in a properly designed evangelistic Sunday School."<sup>49</sup> He starts his enumeration with the *Process Principle*. Ken Hemphill maintains that, "church growth is a process and not an event. As such, a process requires planning, goal setting, management of resources, and regular

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<sup>47</sup> Hemphill, 48-49.

<sup>48</sup> Hemphill, 49.

<sup>49</sup> Hemphill, 11.



evaluation of results and effectiveness.”<sup>50</sup> This requires a great deal of organizational structure and human resources.

The second principle is the *Pyramid Principle*. He states, “To enlarge the pyramid, you must first enlarge its base. The base of the pyramid is the organization structure for growth.”<sup>51</sup>

The third principle is the *Receptivity Principle*. Ken points out, “The *Receptivity Principle* establishes evangelism as a priority for church growth and discusses how best to present the gospel by understanding and developing natural receptivity in those to whom you are witnessing.”<sup>52</sup>

Hemphill’s fourth principle is the *Homogeneity Principle*. This principle focuses like a laser on Sunday School evangelism. Ken suggests, “The small groups of Sunday School provide a natural means of using the principle of homogeneity for outreach and for developing homogenous relationships for assimilation.”<sup>53</sup> The small groups of Sunday School provide an opportunity for relational evangelism. The small group settings are also useful for assimilation.

The *New Unit Principle* is the fifth principle. This principle entails the expansion of the organizational structure. Ken argues that, “Growth emanates from new units, new members, and new churches. Churches must regularly create new groups to maintain the flow of new life.”<sup>54</sup> Some churches are ill equipped and do not have enough space and resources available to apply the New Unit Principle.

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<sup>50</sup> Hemphill, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Hemphill, 12.

<sup>52</sup> Hemphill, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Hemphill, 14.

<sup>54</sup> Hemphill, 14.



Last but not least is the *Leadership Principle*. This principle could be considered as one of the most important principles among the others. "A church must have plenty of Great Commission-conscious leaders. The Sunday School is well designed to recruit and allocate church growth leaders. As we look carefully at the basics of Sunday School work, we will see that all these principles are incorporated in the properly designed evangelistic Sunday School."<sup>55</sup> When Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is viewed through the lens of these six principles it is apparent that it would be in a better position to promote the evangelistic growth of the Sunday School. More work is needed to create this possibility. The plan to promote Sunday School evangelism will be spelled out in the next chapter.

Leonard Sanderson in his book, *Using the Sunday School in Evangelism* writes, "Planning for Sunday school growth and improvement contributes to evangelism because planning for Sunday school growth and improvement increases the enrolment of a Sunday school."<sup>56</sup> The context seems to indicate that Leonard Sanderson talks more about numerical growth. Some Sunday School leaders tend to be more concerned about numerical growth than spiritual growth. The author of this thesis has based his statement on his own experience with the Sunday School ministry. The author of this thesis believes that Sunday School numerical growth needs to go hand in hand with spiritual growth.

Sanderson also argues, "The Sunday school is the proper agency of the church to find the lost people. If they are to be won, they must be found. If they are to be found, our

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<sup>55</sup> Hemphill, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Leonard Sanderson, *Using the Sunday School in Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1958), 46.



Sunday schools must be dedicated to find them.”<sup>57</sup> Lost people are not hard to find because they are everywhere. Raymond T. Brock states, “Decisions for Christ are made in the homes as soul winners from Sunday school live for Christ in the community and witness for Him at every opportunity.”<sup>58</sup> If Sunday School outreach leaders take the Gospel into their communities, the seeds of the Gospel would be sown and the harvest would be life changing. Brock goes on to say,

No phase of community life is beyond the influence of the evangelistic Sunday school. Jails, hospitals, street corners, and rented halls all become scenes of evangelistic witnessing and soul winning. Neighboring communities feel the influence of evangelism as they are brought into contact with the evangelistic church through the establishment of branch Sunday schools and churches.<sup>59</sup>

Sunday School teachers are in a great position to bring students into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Sunday School outreach ministry goes out to the lost to bring them to the church in order to teach them and train them to become disciples of Christ. When the lost get baptized, they need to be assimilated into the church. Sunday School is an excellent place to train them to become Christ’s disciples.

In the book, *Understanding Sunday School* written by the Evangelical Teaching Training Association (E.T.T.A.), it is stated, “If Sunday school ministry is really on target, the church will see as one of its obligations the discipling of individuals into the service of Christ and his church.”<sup>60</sup> This should be the Sunday School ministry’s concern to develop those enrolled into disciples of Christ. In this book, it is also said, “Growing in Christ likeness must include stewardship and dedication of service. A total ministry of discipling should include teaching the Word of God, development and practice of godly

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<sup>57</sup> Sanderson, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Raymond T. Brock, *Into the Highways and Hedges*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 114.

<sup>59</sup> Brock, 114.

<sup>60</sup> Evangelical Teacher Training Association, *Understanding Sunday School* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 1981), 8.



living, and emphasis upon the principle of service.”<sup>61</sup> Making disciples in Sunday School ministry would respond to the mandate of the Great Commission. One of the purposes of making disciples is “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:12). Sunday School classes, through Bible study, prayer, and fellowship, provide a fertile ground for servant hood.

Robert E. Coleman, the author of *The Master Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship* argues,

The Great Commission is not merely to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15), nor to baptize a lot of converts into the name of the triune God, nor to teach them the precepts of Christ, but to “make disciples”—to build people like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ that they not only followed, but also led others to follow his way. Only as disciples were made could the other activities of the commission fulfill their purpose.<sup>62</sup>

Today, many churches seem to lose commitment to making disciples for Christ’s sake.

The Sunday School outreach ministry will fulfill its purpose when those who are being reached and assimilated into the church reproduce themselves in the lives of others.

Robert E. Coleman also states, “The need of the hour is a return to the kind of evangelism which majors in people winning other people to Christ and building those they have won into disciples who can win and build others.”<sup>63</sup>

The above arguments of Robert Coleman serve as a call for a new way of thinking about the Sunday School in-reach and out-reach ministry. Making disciples through the Sunday School ministry enables the church to fulfill the Great Commission.

Raymond T. Brock states, “When utilized to the fullness of its potential, the Sunday school can become the strongest arm for evangelism in the church. Evangelistic

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<sup>61</sup> Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship: Two Books in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1993, 1998), 101.

<sup>63</sup> Coleman, 173-174.



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churches are growing churches. The Sunday school should spearhead this growth, but all agencies in the churches must co-operate to make the growth permanent.”<sup>64</sup> The author goes on to say, “If a church is to be evangelistic, its Sunday school must be strengthened for this ministry. The Sunday school can become the starting point for perpetual evangelism in the church. Its program must be so geared that evangelism is the norm, not the exception.”<sup>65</sup>

The genesis of Sunday School can be traced back to England. Robert Raikes, a British publisher, began Sunday School in 1780 as an outreach ministry for underclass children. The book, *Understanding Sunday School*, tells the story:

Though his early efforts were basically trial and error, Robert Raikes, a British publisher, sought to meet the needs of the vast number of poor children in Gloucester by establishing a Sunday education program. His Sunday school was conducted in the kitchen of Mrs. Meredith in Sooty Alley, the worst slum of that area. The objectives were to keep children off the street, teach them to read and write, and bring them into contact with the gospel . . . Though Raikes’ efforts met opposition, they contributed to a growing movement which led to a worldwide ministry.<sup>66</sup>

Even today, many adult followers of Christ do not participate in any Sunday School activities, because they view the institution of Sunday School as being useful only to the children. It is regrettable to perceive Sunday School only for children. Perhaps, God used Robert Raikes as one of his instruments of choice to continue to carry out His plan of redemption.

Later on, the growing movement of Sunday School crossed over the Atlantic and spread in America.

The beginning of the Sunday School in the United States was similar to that of England as William Elliot opened his kitchen to children in Oak Ridge, Virginia,

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<sup>64</sup> Brock, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Brock, 33.

<sup>66</sup> Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 6.



poorly for teaching on Sunday. Various individuals encouraged his efforts and finally the church began to see the possibilities. This period of experimentation led to growth establishing city Sunday school unions in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.<sup>67</sup>

over 2 By many standards, the Sunday School institution is perceived to also have a successful ministry in many churches. The early followers of Christ had a successful ministry due to their commitment to the Great Commission and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Raymond T. Brock, in his book, *Into the Highways and Hedges*, cites a survey that shows that Sunday School has been a part of the modern church's success in fulfilling the Great Commission. The survey indicates that, "80 per cent of all converts in the church come through the ministry of the Sunday School. That leaves only one-fifth of the new members to be reaped by all other agencies of the church combined."<sup>68</sup>

today This high percentage confirms that Sunday School can provide a fertile ground for evangelism. Bobby H. Welch, in his book, *Evangelism through the Sunday School*, states, "Sunday School and evangelism truly is a marriage made in heaven and is just waiting to unite at your church!"<sup>69</sup> The author goes on to say, "The lost people wait, the church waits, the Sunday School waits, the people of our church wait, heaven waits, and hell waits. God and Christ now wait to see what you will do. Christian friend, please do not wait any longer. Make this commitment so that you, your Sunday School, and your church become a mighty Great Commission army for the glory of God and souls."<sup>70</sup>

During the eighteen century, Sunday School made its debut in America. As previously stated, the American Sunday School Union was formed in 1817. During the last century, Sunday School had extended to all ages. Ironically, some churches have

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<sup>67</sup> Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Brock, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Bobby H. Welch, *Evangelism through the Sunday School* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 1997), 46.

<sup>70</sup> Welch, 163.



poorly treated Sunday School; while other churches use it as an important agent of church growth. Bill L. Taylor and Louis B. Hanks state that, "Sunday School has a heritage of over 200 years. . . . Because of this lengthy heritage, some people may consider Sunday School a relic of the past. They may question whether Sunday School has anything to offer churches of the third millennium. We are glad to say that it does."<sup>71</sup>

As it has been for many years, Sunday School can still be today an important tool for completing the Great Commission. Still, "we need to develop a new way of thinking about Sunday School if we are to tap its vitality for a new day."<sup>72</sup> For the new millennium, Sunday School ministry needs to recapture a focus on outreach – fulfilling the mandate of the Great Commission. It has been done in the past. It still can be done today.

The process of disciple making involves the whole congregation. It is a big spiritual undertaking, but it is a worthy undertaking. For the process to work, teams must be trained in outreach ministry, in how to cope with changes in the church, in magnifying the role of Sunday School, in evangelism, and in making disciples. Furthermore, maximizing the role of Sunday School outreach in this new endeavor must be a benchmark for Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

Among other essential tasks, such as pastoral care, fostering fellowship, communicating biblical truths, and support groups, just to name a few, Sunday School outreach ministry should be a core task of all Sunday School outreach leaders. Christ's plan for his followers is to develop others into disciples. The Sunday School class

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<sup>71</sup> Bill L. Taylor and Louis B. Hanks, *Sunday School for a New Century* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 1999), 22.

<sup>72</sup> Taylor and Hanks, 22.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PROJECT DESIGN

The leadership of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has evaluated the ministries of the church on many occasions. The pastoral staff regularly goes over the meetings, trainings, programs, and ministries of the church. In December 2009, the church developed a new disciple-making philosophy of ministry. The author of this thesis is responsible to train a cluster of leaders in a step-by-step process to develop in church members growing relationships with Christ and with each other. Teams are trained to expand the church's impact upon the members and to stir up enthusiasm for ministry. The ministries of the church are evaluated on a semi-annual basis. Leading people to Christ and discipleship have become two main objectives of the church today.

The process of disciple making involves the whole congregation. It is a big spiritual undertaking, but it is a worthy undertaking. For the process to work, teams must be trained in outreach ministry, in how to cope with changes in the church, in magnifying the role of Sunday School, in evangelism, and in making disciples. Furthermore, maximizing the role of Sunday School outreach in this new endeavor must be a benchmark for Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

Among other essential issues, such as pastoral care, fostering fellowship, communicating biblical truths, and support groups, just to name a few, Sunday School outreach ministry should be a core task of all Sunday School outreach leaders. Christ's plan for his followers is to develop others into disciples. The Sunday School class, through its small group setting, facilitates not only a growing relationship with Christ but



also opens a window of opportunity for in-reach ministry and disciple making can become a natural outflow. Therefore, Sunday School has potential for both in-reach and outreach ministry.

Just as it is important for the pastoral staff to assess the ministries of the church on a semi-annual basis, it is also important for those in leadership positions in Sunday School to evaluate their ministry in order to make sure it is operating at its highest potential when it comes to obeying the mandate of the Great Commission. A lack of understanding on the part of Sunday School leaders and Sunday School teachers concerning Sunday School outreach ministry has prompted the author of this thesis to completely reevaluate the Sunday School ministry of the church.

In order to clearly find out where the Sunday School program was leading its class members in term of the Great Commission and what steps can be taken to move the Sunday School towards a more aggressive and effective outreach ministry, a formal evaluation of the Sunday School program has been conducted.

In an informal survey of the Sunday School ministries of many Haitian churches in Boston, it has been discovered that there is a clear need for Sunday School outreach ministry not only in Tabernacle Baptist Congregation but also in other Haitian churches in the surrounding communities of Boston (see Appendices A and B). If Haitian churches want to use the Sunday Sunday School ministry to promote evangelism, it is important that the Sunday School leadership of these churches evaluate their Sunday School ministry's emphasis on fulfilling the mandate of the Great Commission.

In 2007, after a close examination of the Sunday School ministry of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, the need for an outreach focus was clear. The Sunday School



teachers at this church have a great sense of responsibility when it comes to teaching the Word of God and providing opportunity for fellowship with Sunday School members, but these teachers seemed to neglect the fact that an evangelistic Sunday School is also one of the key elements in growing Sunday School ministry.

As previously stated in Chapter One, at the onset of the author's thesis project in the Fall of 2009, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation had enrolled an average of 510 class members for the 2009-2010 academic year. Sunday School had an average of 255 adults in 7 ongoing classes. This represents an average of 63% of the 403 church members.

The Sunday School ministry had 182 children enrolled. (Children are not included in the church membership count, as they will become church members when they get baptized.) The eight Sunday School classes in the children's department face an array of challenges such as space, finding appropriate curriculum, and outreach focus. Christian education materials used by the church are designed to help the children in their spiritual development, and many resources are employed to help children in the development of their spiritual journey, but not much emphasis is placed upon outreach.

The youth department (under the leadership of the youth pastor) had enrolled 73 class members. More than one hundred have participated in Sunday School activities. Many of those youth come to Sunday School to have fellowship with each other. Some come because they are compelled by their parents. Others come because they want to learn about the Word of God.

The adult department of the Sunday School ministry plays a vital role in the church in terms of membership. An estimated 63% of church membership is enrolled in Sunday School. Most of this 63% attend Sunday School on a regular basis, while some of



them have to work every other weekend. These adults do not show up with empty hearts and minds. They possess a reservoir of experience and knowledge. Therefore, they respond to the lessons in the context of their own life situation.

Sometimes, it is mind-boggling and nerve wracking to evangelize Haitian adults. For example, many of them used to believe in the practice of Voodoo—a form of magic ingrained in the Haitian collective conscious. The author of this thesis has interviewed people who came to church because they tried to escape the influence of evil spirits in the practice of Voodoo. Those people are looking for protection against witchcraft. Pentecostal denominations seem to be more appealing to this group of people. Many Haitian adults have been in church for several years, but still they need to spiritually grow into the likeness of Christ.

Tabernacle Baptist Church has an average of 37% of its members who do not attend Sunday School activities. The author of this thesis believes that by implementing a plan involving Sunday School teachers and outreach leaders praying for the lost as well as visiting and contacting non-enrolled church members and visitors, the number of adult students would inevitably increase.

As a first step in evaluating the current teaching practices of the Sunday School a questionnaire was distributed in June 2009, that intended to show what teachers already did well in class and what they had already accomplished in terms of outreach (Appendix A). Teachers were asked to tell how much time they personally spent on a weekly basis in preparation for their lessons. They were asked to list at least 12 names of students to whom they reach out or with whom they have a closer relationship. They were also asked to tell how much time they spend in prayer and personal Bible study per week.



The questionnaire also sought to find out how much contact the teachers had with students outside of class. They were also asked how many students they had contacted during the last two weeks before the Sunday School Teachers' Survey. The questionnaire sought to find out if there were people in Sunday School who have special needs (emotional distress, illness, death, loss of job, school difficulties). They were asked if they have reached out to those individuals.

The survey also sought to find out how the teachers spent their time in preparation for their class. They were asked what they had read related to Sunday School ministry as well as what they had read about the subject they were currently teaching. The survey sought to find out how they used their class time, and how their lessons had been taught evangelistically. The survey also sought to find out why some teachers either did not participate or showed up late to Sunday morning prayer (as required).

Only six out of thirty-four teachers had spent more than ten hours per week in preparation for their class. They spent the same time frame in prayer and personal Bible study per week. They were able to give useful information concerning the students in their class. A pool of sixteen teachers spent two to six hours in lesson preparation per week. Most of them claimed to spend the same amount of time in prayer, and in personal Bible study. One teacher claimed to spend eight hours in preparation for his class and seven hours in prayer and in personal Bible study.

Concerning the Sunday Morning Prayer meeting eleven teachers had participated on a regular basis. Six other Sunday School teachers had attended this prayer meeting once in a while. Another pool of five teachers had never participated for multiple reasons. The survey sought to find out if the Sunday School teachers had reached out to the



students in their class. Many teachers indicated that they had reached out to only a few class members; five of them indicated that they had not reached out to any.

With this evaluation of the current practices and methodologies of the Sunday School ministry in place, a new understanding of the ministry emerged, and it was possible to see what steps needed to be taken in order to make Sunday School an effective outreach tool for Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

After a careful examination of the philosophy of the Sunday School program, it was concluded that a well balanced Sunday School program should include: inductive Bible study (observation, interpretation, application), the development of the teachers' personal relationships with God and with their students, the promotion of fellowship among the class members, and the promotion of an evangelistic Sunday School ministry. The evaluation revealed that Sunday School *outreach* was a weakness in Tabernacle Baptist Congregation.

In order for Sunday School to be an effective outreach tool, the class members must be encouraged to reach out to the lost. First, Sunday School teachers must be trained in evangelism, and then they must pass along these training experiences to the students, who in turn, will be able to train others also. Jesus spent years preparing the twelve apostles. For example, he sent them out in pairs for an evangelistic campaign during his ministry in Galilee (Mark 6:7-13). By sending them in pairs he provided them with mutual support and reinforced veracity of the Gospel by providing the testimony of two witnesses (Deut 17:6). The Sunday School, which is the backbone of educational ministry of Tabernacle Baptist Church, could emulate this example of outreach.



The survey revealed that the classes did not have an outreach method to follow. The teaching philosophy did not emphasize the importance of outreach ministry, and each Sunday School class could benefit from the design of an outreach implementation plan. As the cliché says, "Sunday School will work only if you work Sunday School." This principle could be applied to the 'working' of an outreach program in Sunday School, through emphases in teaching, fellowship, and personal contact through telephone calls and home visits, just to name a few.

A series of trainings on Sunday School evangelism for the Sunday School teachers and potential outreach leaders at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation were conducted in July 2009. Training Sunday School teachers in evangelistic teaching was a daunting task. The training emphasized that the Sunday School ministry must be evangelistic in order for this ministry to be a growth tool for the church; otherwise it would simply be a teaching arm for the church and not a *reaching* arm.

During the last two years, the pastoral staff of the church has introduced a new series of Bible studies on the miracles of Jesus, as found in the synoptic Gospels. The emphasis was on the book of Mark, in which Jesus is presented as both the Son of Man, and the Son of God. The key verse was: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This series was used as the Sunday School curriculum, with emphasis on discipleship ministry and fellowship. Jesus came to serve, not to be served, and this should also be the attitude of a disciple. This should also be the attitude of the Sunday School teacher not only towards students in class, but also towards the lost.



The Bible remains the textbook of the Sunday School ministry. During the training session, the teachers learned how to teach Biblical truths in a way that could bring evangelism to the center stage of the lesson plan. The teachers were divided into small groups for the sake of brainstorming both *in-reach* and *outreach* ministry. The sessions covered evangelistic teaching principles. The first principle is to teach the Bible. This does not preclude using other relevant literature, but it is essential that a teacher effectively communicates the content of Scripture in order to bring the message of salvation to the Sunday School class.

The training also touched upon the concept of personal evangelism or evangelistic relationships. The teachers learned how to cultivate good relationships with people inside the class, inside the church, and outside the church. The evangelistic responsibility of the teacher will be in part fulfilled when the student or prospect is incorporated into the life of the church. Proclaiming salvation through Jesus was one of the dominant themes of the training. If Christ is not proclaimed during the lesson, there will be no evangelistic teaching. Some lessons that were prepared on the miracles performed by Jesus could be taught evangelistically and lead to an evangelistic response.

The training touched upon the role of the Holy Spirit in interpreting Scripture. The teachers were advised to pray for the students and to pray on a regular basis for the salvation of the lost. They were advised to pray over the name of each student and to pray for God's guidance during the lesson preparation. The Holy Spirit uses teachers as messengers communicating God's truths to believers and to non-believers. The teachers were taught to model the Christian life before the class and before the world and to realize that being a Christian is an experience to be lived.



When biblical principles have found their application in the lives of the Sunday School teachers, students, and the lost, the Sunday School is moving toward its evangelistic goal. When students' lives are being transformed into the likeness of Christ through the evangelistic teaching, this becomes a means of measuring the effects of the training. If the teacher becomes evangelistic, lives will be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and an evangelistic response will be a natural overflow.

The Sunday School teachers were taught to bear in mind that an evangelistic teaching entails teaching the biblical truth in a way that both wins the lost and facilitates spiritual growth among the saved. Some of the means of fostering spiritual growth are reading and applying the Word of God on a regular basis, fellowshiping, praying on a regular basis, worshipping God, and attending both Bible study and Sunday School.

These training sessions served as a foundation for the curriculum revision of the Christian education program at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. Sunday School teachers who participate in these training sessions could be called upon in the future to train class members or outreach leaders to promote outreach. These teachers are also expected to provide mentoring, discipling, and personal evangelism in a variety of circumstances. This new mindset opened a window of opportunity to improve their teaching skills.

The training sessions on in-reach and outreach ministry were extended to include to other outreach leaders who assist the teachers. These trainings occurred in the beginning of September 2009, and were designed to avoid over-burdening the teachers who already bear the responsibility to prepare the lesson plan on a weekly basis. These training sessions were aimed at developing an in-reach and outreach mindset among the students. A few class members also received basic training in becoming "care leaders".



The care leaders were there to inspire other class members to develop an outreach mindset. They were aimed at becoming a tool for in-reach and outreach focus. Care leaders and outreach leaders are interchangeable.

As the Sunday School teachers and the “care leaders” participated the training sessions, it became important to move to the implementation of this outreach plan. One of the pastoral staff met with the author to review the author’s plan. The project was accepted and each department of the Sunday School ministry had to start the implementation in September 2009. The methodologies used for in-reach and outreach might differ from class to class as long as they led to the promotion of Sunday School evangelism.

Under the plan, Sunday School classes were expected to be divided into small groups of eight students in order to develop a better relationship between students and Sunday School outreach leaders. Working within a small group setting facilitates personal evangelism. Each class was expected to have two or three small groups. Each class was expected to have two teachers, one or two secretaries, and two “care leaders” or outreach leaders. Some of the classrooms available presented a real challenge for the fulfillment of the project because they did not have enough space available.

Each care leader played the role of a “care giver”. They were responsible for contacting the class members on a regular basis for prayer, fellowship, Bible study, and seeking opportunities to reach out to unbelievers in the class member’s family. The care leaders were expected to help the Sunday School teachers in the fulfillment of the daunting task of outreach ministry. The outreach leaders could emulate the teachers while the other students could model both the teachers and the outreach leaders. Both the



teachers and the outreach leaders are expected to start the cycle again with others and pass it unto other students and prospects (2 Tim 2:2).

### **Children's Department**

While Sunday School teachers have been using a discipleship-based curriculum, they have been advised to use other resources that are available for those who want to promote child evangelism in the Sunday School ministry. The resources used since September 2009 could have a great impact on the children's spiritual journey. Parental involvement is essential to the promotion of child evangelism, thus an open house session for parents was scheduled for October 2009. Many parents responded to that invitation. During the meeting, parents were advised to let their children come with their friends and neighbors to Sunday School. It is hoped that the church will see those visitors participating as guests in other church activities such as Sunday School fellowship activities, worship service, and family outings.

Encouraging children to come with their friends to Sunday School is a way to promote child evangelism. This is possible when Sunday School teachers, children and parents develop close relationships. Sunday School teachers are expected to develop a healthy relationship with the children's parents. The teachers in the Children's Department are expected to teach their lesson evangelistically by showing the children that Christ is the Savior of the world and that he cares for them.

Based on his own experiences with the First Haitian Baptist Church and Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, the author of this thesis has found that the majority of the children who were brought up and led to Christ in Sunday School remain in these



churches and continue to show spiritual maturity when they enter the season of adulthood.

The teachers have been encouraged to teach the children compassion towards the less fortunate. For example, in 2009 during the Christmas season, the children brought many toys and other items to send to the children of Haiti. The person who is in charge of the Children's Department took care of making sure those gifts were received.

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation sent its first missionaries on a trip to Haiti on June 29, 2010. On this occasion, the children collected money from their parents and from other people in order to help their peers who were affected by the earthquake that rattled Haiti on January 12, 2010. This is another great example of promoting Sunday School evangelism in the context of children's ministry.

The teachers were asked to be in the classroom as early as possible in order to engage in conversations with the children. There, they may end up getting some useful information from the children concerning both their relationship with God and their relationships with family and friends. As a prelude to Sunday School, the teachers of the Children's Department sing and pray together (Col 3:16) with the children as Jesus used to sing spiritual songs and pray with the disciples (Matt 26:30). The teachers have been encouraged to promote fellowship with the children in their class. Some children come to Sunday School because they enjoy the Christian fellowship both inside and outside the classroom.

The author pointed out to the teachers and outreach leaders that they must help parents in the quest to, "train up a child in the way he should go" so that "when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). "The way" the child should go, is towards



salvation through Jesus Christ. Therefore, an evangelistic teaching of biblical truths will greatly impact the child for years to come and with the help of the Holy Spirit he/she will not depart from it. Teachers are expected to contact the children and their parents by email, telephone and even by home visitation. Sometimes, they might find a window of opportunity to reach out to the lost in the child's family. Reaching out to the children of the lost through the Sunday School ministry contributes largely to the promotion of child evangelism.

### **Youth Department**

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has a youth pastor who is in charge of the Youth Department. The senior pastor has also put him in charge of the college students who are on campus. Some of the youth bring friends to Sunday School. Under the new plan the Sunday School teachers in the youth department must develop a closer relationship with the youth. The goal is for the youth themselves to become disciplers by discipling their companions. For example, some youth assist the teachers in lesson preparation and even teach the other students. In order for those students to become disciplers, others must train them. The youth Sunday School teachers have been encouraged to plan extra curricular activities on Friday night. The teachers who are in charge want the youth to bring their family's members, unbelievers, and friends to the "Friday social" activities. Regular Bible study is also encouraged.

Some teachers and outreach leaders already participate in non-church related activities with the youth. They have lunch together and go to see movies with their friends (with parental permission). Outreach leaders and teachers are expected to build



bridges between parents and youth. Some of these leaders are able to help with family relationships and spiritual issues. Some of the youth leaders have gone to visit both students' and prospective student's families. An old cliché says, "A home going teacher makes a church going student."

Teachers are encouraged to help the youth develop a closer relationship with God through regular Sunday School activities, through involvement in Sunday School outreach, through an active prayer life, through fellowship with other youth within the Sunday School ministry, and through participation with the Sunday School small group settings. The need to have more youth involved in small groups and other Sunday School outreach activities cannot be underestimated.

The author of this thesis has longed to see the development of a disciple making philosophy in the Youth Department, and hopes that this is accomplished by training youth leaders for disciple making. These youth leaders would lead small groups under the leadership of Sunday School teachers who will serve as mentors to those youth leaders. This will enhance the role of Sunday School in making disciples.

During the training sessions that took place in July 2009, teachers were challenged to communicate biblical truth to the youth with an evangelistic overtone. It is essential that those who teach the youth be devoted to evangelizing them. One of the youth is currently assisting his teacher in his Sunday School outreach. During another training session on September 2009, teachers in the Youth Department were challenged to build closer relationships with the youth attending Sunday School. This involves anything from simply knowing the name, address, phone number, and birthday of the



youth to showing genuine interest in their school activities and their dreams for a future career.

During the training teachers were reminded how to help with the struggles in family relationships and spiritual issues that some youth experience. The teachers were challenged to be on their knees in prayer on behalf of the youth. These teachers were well aware of the spiritual challenges facing the youth. One of the teachers invited a group of young people to spend a weekend with her children. Through this experience the teacher and her children were able to get to know the young people better, but it also helped the teacher and other parents to develop a closer relationship with each other. The teachers are now required to spend time in prayer with the youth before each class session.

During the 2010 Spring break, the teachers along with the youth leaders organized a retreat for the youth. The retreat had an evangelistic overtone. Youth from other churches and from all walks of life were also invited to join them. Many youths were touched by this special event. A spiritual awakening seemed to take place at the retreat. Lives were being transformed into the likeness of Christ. Youth leaders and Sunday School teachers are encouraged to challenge the youth to go to their own families, their schools, their neighborhoods, and to their friends to share the gospel. God through the Sunday School ministry of the church can change the lives of many young people who are struggling with emotional distress and spiritual disturbance. Chapter Five will give an evaluation of the training sessions and their application in the Youth Department.



## **The Adult Department**

The Sunday School's Adult Department is a vital part of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation in terms of membership. As previously stated, the church had 255 adult church members enrolled in Sunday School during the 2009-2010 academic year. This number represents 63% of the total church membership. Classes are organized according to age groups ranging from young adults to senior citizens.

Some of the people who attend Sunday School are either visitors or prospective members who have a genuine desire to study the Bible. During the training sessions held in July 2009, teachers and outreach leaders were taught the necessity to break down the adult class into small groups of no more than eight people. The development of small cell groups enables the adults to develop a closer relationship with each other. They were able to encourage other class members to faithfully participate in Sunday School activities. They even had the opportunity to challenge other un-enrolled members to come to Sunday School. The adults do not live in a vacuum. They have a keen sense of community. They enter the classroom with a reservoir of experience. They will respond to the lesson in the context of their life's situation.

The church's Sunday School has become important for the adults when family and friends are unable to meet their needs. The adults are able to develop relationships with prospective members. They know that they belong to God's family and have trustworthy friends. They also want to make sure that their teachers and outreach leaders can be relied upon. The Adult Department offers the best setting to promote relational evangelism.



Adults who attend Sunday School at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation tend to have a genuine desire to study the Word of God, and many come because they enjoy the friendship and the fellowship they have built with each other. Many teachers have cultivated a close relationship with their students. Some teachers come early to talk to them about many things that could stir up their interest. It is, however, not easy to get genuine information from Haitian adults. They tend to be “extroverted” only when it comes to bragging about their country, their family and promoting themselves. They want to be convinced that you have something to offer. Like any other age bracket, they are interested in topics that meet their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. The teachers and outreach leaders need to be familiar with the characteristics of the ethnic group that they are trying to reach.

The training sessions for teachers of adult Sunday School emphasized the importance of outreach. Every adult class could benefit from an outreach mindset, where teachers maintain phone contact and in-home visitation of non-active members, unchurched people and the lost. For example, the teachers or the outreach class leaders could take time to write the names of the individuals they want to reach. They would be able to contact these people by phone, email or by visitation.

One of the most effective ways to increase Sunday School attendance is through in-home visitation. During the training session in September 2009, teachers were encouraged to make an effort to do home visitation. Some of the teachers were less enthusiastic to do home visitation but they were more willing to do phone contacts. Involving other outreach leaders and even some class members in the process could aid in



the daunting task of visitation. It was suggested that the teachers in the Adult Department do in-home visitation with outreach leaders at least twice a month.

The in-home visitation could be done in the evenings, as this is often the best time to connect with the Haitian people. They tend to be more available on Friday nights and on Saturdays. Teachers and the outreach leaders who go with them must prepare ahead of time what they want to accomplish during the visitation. They need to have the details regarding the time to spend in each house, the number of families to visit, the places to go, and the area to cover. Their goal would be to visit church visitors, and invite them to come back and visit their Sunday School classes. They must also focus on visiting non-active members and the lost.

The teachers were given the responsibility to organize and implement this new visitation ministry. This is possible if the teachers promote and encourage an evangelistic Sunday School mentality among the students. It is in the best interest of the Sunday School outreach ministry to train other leaders to help carry the burden of teaching, visitation, and other ministerial activities.

When conducting Sunday School outreach visit, it is helpful to hand out brochures, pamphlets, bulletins and any other things that would give helpful information about Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. Two or three people as a general rule should conduct these visits. The teacher and the small group of visitors must carry their Bibles. They could even offer a small gift such as a Bible, a CD, or other small items with the logo of the church as a token of appreciation for letting the group engage in conversation with the person or with the family.



If the person or the family refuses to welcome the teacher and the small group, they need to kindly leave the place without any confrontation because it is not about them but it is about God. Rather, they would then pray for this person or family.

When inviting people to attend Sunday School, one of the outreach leaders might offer to meet the visitor at an easy to find place in the parking lot of the church. The visitor must be introduced to the class members, and it may be helpful to stay with the visitor during the worship service. This strategy could be a good tool in the development of Sunday School outreach focus.

The project idea and the training sessions were presented to the pastoral staff who gave their own input and helped with the training sessions. This project was also presented to each Sunday School ministry department head, and to other Sunday School leaders. The project design and training sessions were presented in small group settings and were well received by many individuals in attendance. This plan was presented as a semi-annual trial run in the expectation that the teachers and the outreach leaders would put in time and effort to carry it out.

During an annual fellowship dinner organized on September 2009 on behalf of the teachers and Sunday School staff, the teachers and the Sunday School staff were shown appreciation for their dedication to teaching and to other Sunday School activities. Special thanks went to those who took time to build relationships in their class by promoting fellowship both inside and outside the classroom.

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has a great deal of potential for both numerical and spiritual growth in Sunday School. In a church where the Sunday School attendance tends to increase, the potential for Sunday School outreach ministry is enormous. It is the



goal of this outreach plan to promote Sunday School evangelism in all departments through evangelistic teaching, in-home visitation, phone contact, and prayer. If the teachers and outreach leaders put time and effort in the development of the project ideas, and come to the understanding that evangelistic teaching and outreach are both sides of the same coin, Sunday School growth will be a natural overflow. The implementation and evaluation of the project design will be spelled out in the following chapter.

and to prospective members. This was their mandate before the implementation of the project design.

The multiple training sessions on Sunday School evangelism during the summer of 2009 marked a turning point for Sunday School outreach ministry at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. Significant decisions concerning the church's methods of in-reach and outreach loomed immediately ahead after the training sessions were over. Evangelism, which was the marching order of the early Church, was not on Tabernacle Baptist Congregation Sunday School ministry's radar.

This training was designed in the hope that the teachers and outreach leaders could begin to view the Sunday School educational program through the lens of the Great Commission. The impact of the training sessions as the cutting edge of Sunday School outreach remained to be seen and experienced. The project would be judged successful if the teachers and outreach leaders were able to develop an outreach mentality among class members.

The outcomes of this outreach campaign are assessed in this chapter. Any changes in the teachers' outreach mindset are evaluated. A post-thesis project questionnaire similar to the pre-thesis project questionnaire was distributed to the teachers in September 2010. This post-thesis questionnaire was completed with the intent of evaluating the



## CHAPTER FIVE

### PROJECT EVALUATION

In the Sunday School ministry, the teachers' priority seemed to have been out of order when it came to reaching out to the lost. In their weekly teaching responsibilities they were more concerned with simply teaching the Word of God to the class members and to prospective members. This was their mindset before the implementation of the project design.

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project's outreach implementation. The main purpose of this thesis project is to encourage inactive church members to come to Sunday School by the implementation of either home visitation or phone contact, and to promote outreach to the lost through visitation and the prayers of Sunday School leaders and class members. All of the above varieties of activity have the propensity to numerically and spiritually increase Sunday School ministry.

Other In the previous chapter, the author mentioned that the teachers and outreach leaders were excited about the training sessions on Sunday School outreach. When it came to the implementation of the program, some Sunday School teachers and outreach leaders had received the plan with enthusiasm. Others, however, gave it a lukewarm reception due to either their unwillingness to conduct in-home visitations or for other personal reasons.

For example, one of the teachers had a lot to complain about when it came to in-home visitation. She has health issues to deal with. Some Sunday School teachers preferred to participate in personal relationships and class fellowship. They preferred in-reach ministry and personal evangelism. They had planned to invite others to come to Sunday School. For example, in 2009 a family of six people visited the church in response to a Sunday School teacher's invitation. The teacher did not introduce the members of this family to any Sunday School class *per se*, and a great window of opportunity was about to be lost. Fortunately the author of this thesis was able to spend some time with this family and sent individuals in the family to the appropriate Sunday School classes. After the church service, the author was able to fellowship with them and



invited them to come back. This was a bold action. This was an example of 'outside of the box' thinking that could help in the quest of Sunday School outreach.

Many Sunday School classes have a list of visitors with their names, phone numbers, and the date of their visit. The outreach leaders or care leaders were to call the visitors, and the prospective students. The goal was to establish close relationships in the Sunday School outreach ministry. Some of the care leaders failed to fulfill this purpose. Other outreach leaders went the extra mile and tried their best to contact the visitors.

Some visitors would like to come back to Sunday School class if only the church could provide them with some kind of transportation. However, due to the high demand, the church "Property and Space Ministry" was not able to find carpooling for some of them. Due to the earthquake that ravaged Haiti, since January 2010 the church has experienced an influx of newcomers with many basic physical and spiritual needs that need to be met.

As for the senior citizens' class, it was difficult to get the class members on board when it came to reaching out, and due to many health challenges, the teachers had to limit their involvement in outreach ministry. However, the Sunday School teachers were able to give the class members other assignments such as the establishment of fellowship with each other, phone contact between class members, and the organization of prayer cells. Some of them meet on Wednesday to pray for the church and for the lost. The teachers organized a retreat for them on May 15, 2010. The guest speaker was one of the students of the senior citizen class. The teachers, along with the elderly ministry, also organized a banquet to be held September 12, 2010. Most of the senior citizens are grandparents, and



they were asked to bring members of their own families and friends. The senior citizen's class has two caring teachers and some outstanding care leaders.

### **The Adult Department**

In the adult department, six Sunday School teachers who are also deacons of the church did in-home visitation on a monthly basis during the implementation of this thesis project. Those teachers came from five adult classes. Not all teachers would get on board with in-home visitation. Those who did participate in visitation went in groups of either two or three people. They were able to visit many church family members. They also had the opportunity to reach out to non-members and to the lost. Some of them were also able to invite non-members to come to Sunday School, Bible study, and prayer meetings.

In May 2008, the author of this thesis went with two Sunday School teachers to visit a woman who had surgery. She was not a member of the church at that time. Her husband was an unbeliever. As a result of this demonstration of love toward her, she became a member of the church. Her husband was very grateful that they took care of his wife. The flame of the teacher's caring love captured the husband's attention. It would be a great evangelistic opportunity if every Sunday School teacher at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation could commit to home visitation and rally around a common goal—to reach out to non-members and non-believers through the Sunday School outreach ministry.

Despite the previous example, it became apparent that in-home visitation was the area of Sunday School evangelism that needed the most improvement during the implementation of this thesis project. The implementation of Sunday School outreach



would be more sustainable if more Sunday School teachers and outreach leaders could be motivated to get involved in the promotion of Sunday School outreach ministry. Some progress was made in the area of encouraging more teachers to embark in home visitation, and in other outreach means such as phone contact and fellowship outside the classroom. The main purpose is to make Sunday School at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation an effective outreach ministry.

In the adult department, some of the Sunday School teachers and outreach leaders did not live up to the plan for multiple reasons. For example, some of the teachers and outreach leaders had complained about the difficulties they encountered calling prospective attendees and class members given that some had either moved or changed their phone number without notice. Sometimes, the best way to relieve this situation was through email, personal contact, and friendly relationship.

A woman in the adult department accepted Christ as her Savior and Lord in March 2010. It was a victory for which all Sunday School classes could celebrate and praise God. This was an outreach success. The church could celebrate the new soul added to the Sunday School and eventually to church membership. Evangelistic teaching has the potential to convince people to make a decision to follow Christ.

During the spring of 2010 the adult department witnessed an increase in Sunday School attendance due in part to newcomers who moved to United States after the earthquake.<sup>73</sup> However, this numerical growth did not translate right away into spiritual growth. At this juncture, the effect of Sunday School evangelism on these newcomers

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<sup>73</sup> The new immigrants were invited either by church members or by their friends. Many of them came with many members of their own family.



remains to be seen, though some have already expressed their desire to join the church as soon as possible.

Prospective students have the opportunity to officially be enrolled in the Sunday School in September 2010, which is the official opening date of the new academic year for Sunday School activities. The leadership of the Sunday School ministry along with the ministry in charge of welcoming visitors organized a fellowship on behalf of those individuals who left Haiti as a result of the earthquake disaster. It was an enjoyable moment. Teachers and outreach leaders spoke to the newcomers about the assistance that the church could offer them. Both the Tabernacle Outreach Ministry (TOM) in charge of welcoming visitors and new immigrants, and the Sunday School outreach ministry have been critical in the assimilation of these individuals into the church fellowship.<sup>74</sup>

To follow up the project, an effort has been made by the author to find out if the philosophy of teaching and the practice of outreach in the adult department have been mutually exclusive. The author's concern was due to the reluctance of some teachers and outreach leaders to be part of in-home visitation. In the post-thesis project questionnaire, some teachers ranked outreach items very low in the order of importance. Items relating to teaching the Word of God still remained priority number one. Fellowship and other extra-curricular activities remained almost the same when compared with the pre-thesis questionnaire. However, a new collective outreach mindset seemed to be born among many Sunday School leaders. The new mindset will need more time to fully develop and the leaders will need further outreach training.

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<sup>74</sup> The names of those individuals are kept in an electronic spreadsheet. They were contacted by the TOM ministry, Sunday School outreach leaders, and some of the deacons.



## **The Children's Department**

The Children's Department had experienced an influx of born again Christians among the children. Seventeen children, ages nine to twelve, came to faith in Christ during the first six months of the implementation of this thesis project. Two teachers and another Sunday School leader took the responsibility to work outside the class as mentors with those children for at least a period of six months. Their goal was to help them grow spiritually, given that they are still babies in the knowledge and understanding of Christ. Some of the teachers in the Children's Department have demonstrated a deep commitment when it comes to teaching the Word of God to the children and also when it comes to reaching out to them inside and outside the classroom. The next step would be to get those children baptized, but the pastoral staff prefers to have them trained and more exposed to the Word of God before they are baptized.

Building relationships with the students in the children's department has been one of the key objectives of the project design. The Sunday School teachers were well aware that knowing the children's names was one of the first steps toward building relationships. Some teachers in the children's department at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation did play a vital role building close relationships among the children.

Some of the teachers were able to meet the children where they were physically, emotionally and spiritually. They worked at being friendly with the children. Many children demonstrated that they have received the spiritual nutrients they need to produce spiritual growth. Some teachers have spent a great deal of time in personal conversation with the children. They have understood that Sunday School ministry is for the most part



about relationship with God and relationships with people. The Sunday School teachers were taught to encourage teamwork and fellowship among the children.

In every teaching session, teachers in the Children's Department were expected to have children working in small groups. The teachers still had to play a major role in the process of building healthy relationships that produced spiritual life changes among the children. Some of the children were able to share their faith and experiences outside the classroom. For example some of the children shared their faith with family members and friends at school and in their own community. However, not all the teachers in the Children's Department lived up to their responsibility.

Some of the teachers did not succeed in helping the children to develop a better relationship with each other and with Christ. They needed to go back to their training and the emphasis on personal contact through occasional phone calls to the children and their parents, or a birthday card or a birthday cake shared among the children in the classroom. A note saying how much they were missed when they did not show up in their classroom would also be a good idea. Personal visits to the children's families were rare. Those teachers also failed to offer prayers of intercession for the children. All of the above would have contributed to building relationships between the children, their parents, and the Sunday School teachers.

Many teachers were able to reinforce their lessons with music that communicated truth, songs that expressed worship, memory verses with truths that related to children, and scriptural drama. Those teachers also reinforced their lesson with other activities, and crafts.



During the 2009-2010 academic year, teachers were expected to give the children the opportunity to grow in the likeness of Christ. The teachers were to equip them with the knowledge of the Word of God and help them develop obedience to God, their parents, and other authority figures. Some teachers were able to teach their lesson with an evangelistic overtone. For example, during one class session, in the Spring of 2010, five children became born again Christians. The teacher was able to create an environment in which the children could experience life change, and learn about Christ as their Lord and Savior. They were able to grow in the truth and love of God for the lost.

This teacher had also spent quality time in fellowship with the children after the class session was over. He engaged himself in personal conversations with the children in his class. He understood that ministry is about relationships with God and with each other. He also understood that those who teach children might share how they felt while growing up. The children will feel closer to their Sunday School teacher when they discover that the teacher was once a child like them. The teacher and the students were able to share experiences inside and outside the classroom.

One of the primary goals of the Children's Department at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation is to help the children to get to know Jesus, and help them grow toward maturity in the likeness of Christ. Therefore, faith should be the leading cause of such an endeavor. Scripture says, "We have been justified through faith" (Rom 5:1). The thesis project outcome did not expect the teachers in the Children's Department to plan lessons to produce faith. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce conviction. What could the teachers do to nurture faith? Scripture says, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). There are many teaching



activities that encourage growth in faith in Christ. For example, some of the teachers were able to find subject matter that encouraged the children to share their feelings and values, and to share their faith and experiences in Christ inside and outside the classroom.

Some of the teachers were able to become familiar with the characteristics and needs of the age group that they taught. Many teachers spent time to get to know the children, who in return expressed the desire to know more about God. The written testimonies that they shared in June 2010 demonstrated the significant impact of the Sunday School ministry on their spiritual journey. The significance of Sunday School in both in-reach and outreach ministry with children cannot over estimated, and should not be neglected.

### **The Youth Department**

As previously stated, the church has four classrooms for the Youth Department. It was expected that the teachers be in the classroom as early as possible, because being in the classroom earlier sends a positive message to the youth about the Sunday School teacher. This also enables the teacher to build an atmosphere of friendship and a spark of excitement in the classroom. Young people like to be where leaders are trustworthy and inspirational. During the implementation of the training, many youth came spiritually alive because some of the teachers were able to conduct the Sunday School class in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship. This statement is based on the author's own observation as a Sunday School Director.

When the youth experience spiritual maturity, they will be able to reach out to other youth. The Sunday School teachers are in a unique position to be spiritual leaders



and mentors to the youth. The youth leaders were willing to get involved in the life of the youth. When they were hurting the teachers and the youth leaders tried to be of help.

Some youth were elated to bring their friends to their classroom because their teachers created a warm atmosphere of Christian fellowship. Some youth were able to reach out to other youth outside the classroom because their teachers conducted the class in an atmosphere of Sunday School outreach. During the 2009-2010 academic year, one youth came to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. According to Tabernacle Baptist Congregation's policy, they were required to attend a class prior to being baptized. The church leadership sets aside two special dates for baptism, Good Friday, and the weekend anniversary of the church, which is the third week of November. After baptism, new converts officially become members of the church.

Two Sunday School teachers were able to work with many youth, both on a one-on-one basis and in small group settings. They encouraged these youth to come with their friends and other members of their family to the Sunday School activities. During the Spring vacation of 2010, youth came with friends to a Friday night meeting to study the Word of God, socialize, and to have fun together. The goal was to reach out to their friends on a personal level. All of these Sunday School activities were good venues for building relationships between teachers and youth. These personal relationships are instrumental in the youth's quest to build relationships with God, with each other, and with their own family. This is not an easy task for teachers to fulfill.

Sunday School ministry should not be dedicated to teaching alone, rather, it must involve many other extracurricular activities, such as fellowshiping, helping, feeding, serving, witnessing, visiting, in-reach and outreach, just to name a few. Because of their



commitment to both teaching *and* reaching out, some teachers had a great opportunity to influence the youth. The net impact of the training upon the teachers remains to be seen and experienced.

As a way to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, the teachers from all Sunday School departments were asked to fill out a post-thesis project questionnaire. This questionnaire was distributed in September 2010 with the intent of finding out what the teachers were able to accomplish in term of the Sunday School outreach ministry. The teachers were asked to state their goals for the academic year 2009-2010 (Appendix C). Twenty-two out of twenty-nine teachers viewed teaching the Word of God as their main goal. One of them made spending more time in prayer her priority for the academic year. Another made “getting the kids fired up for Christ” her goal for the year. Two teachers made the development of personal relationships with the students their primary goal. Only one teacher made the conversion of their students his primary goal for the year.

The teachers were also asked to list their accomplishments during the academic year. One teacher was able to see students spend more time alone with God (devotion) every week. Another teacher was able to encourage each class member to keep in touch with each other. It was a blessing for a teacher to have seven children accepting Christ as their savior during the academic year 2009-2010. In term of accomplishment, none of them mentioned Sunday School outreach.

The questionnaire also sought to find out which of the following activities were found in each class (see Appendix C):

1. Inviting visitors to return to Sunday School by visiting them or calling them
2. Encouraging class members to invite the lost to come to Sunday School



3. Promoting fellowship outside of the class.

Four teachers stated that all of the above were practiced in their class. Eight teachers highlighted two of the above. Twelve said that they only practiced one of the behaviors in their class. The rest stated that none of the activities were practiced.

The teachers were asked to rate the importance of the following items, with (1) as “the most important” and (5) as “the least important” (see Appendix C):

1. I pray for the lost on a regular basis
2. I encourage the study of the Word of God
3. I reached out to those who do not come to Sunday School
4. I develop a friendly relationship with the class members

Almost all of them ranked the study of the Word of God as the most important. Four teachers viewed the study of the Word of God as the second most important. Ten teachers ranked praying for the lost as the most important. Six teachers viewed this as the second most important. Two ranked it as the third most important, and one teacher saw it as the fourth most important. The other teachers had no comments. Four teachers ranked reaching out to those who do not come to Sunday School as the most important. Three teachers viewed it as the second most important. A pool of eight teachers viewed reaching out as the third most important. Four teachers ranked it as the fourth most important. The other teachers did not assign it any importance. Seven teachers thought that developing a friendly relationship with the class members was the most important. Seven ranked it as the second most important. Three teachers classified it as the third most important. Four teachers considered it the fourth most important. Two teachers viewed it as the least important. The other teachers did not assign it a value.

The teachers were asked to rank according to importance at least five items concerning their class. The majority of them ranked teaching as the most important. Few



of them ranked phone contacts as significant. Sunday School outreach did not seem to be on the radar of some of the teachers. Fellowship activities outside the class seemed to be less important in the Adult Department but very important in the Children's and Youth Departments. The church organizes many staff fellowships during the year in order to get the adults involved in fellowship activities. See tables on Appendix C for results of the post- training survey.

There was some progress in the teachers' learning and understanding the importance of the Sunday School outreach ministry. However, some of them had failed to translate into reality what they had learned during the training sessions. It was expected to see Sunday School outreach listed as one of the most important class goals and accomplishments.

In comparing most of the pre-thesis project questionnaire responses to most post-thesis questionnaire responses, it became clear that teaching remained the most important goal, while outreach remained low in priority. The Sunday School ministry will require more time and more training in outreach in order to fully develop an outreach mentality. (See Appendix C for the teachers' responses to some of the post-thesis survey questions.) The pre-thesis questionnaire and the post-thesis questionnaire did not show a significant change in the teachers' outreach mindset.

The main purpose of this thesis project was to design a Sunday School outreach plan that would promote an evangelistic model in all Sunday School departments. This would only be possible if the Sunday School teachers and outreach leaders engage themselves in Sunday School evangelism, through prayer for the lost, phone contact, home visitation, and fellowship both inside and outside the classroom. Some progress has



been made, but this goal was not totally reached. Tabernacle Baptist Congregation can celebrate the fact that students in each department have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

For some Sunday School teachers, the development of a Sunday School outreach mindset remains to be realized. Still, other teachers and Sunday School outreach leaders have made progress in their understanding the importance of a Sunday School outreach ministry. The excitement of the children to coming to Sunday School on a regular basis, the spiritual life changes of many young people and adults, and the decisions made by many to follow Jesus Christ appear to be a natural outgrowth of the training sessions held during the Summer of 2009.

Chapter One displays the congregational profile and the organizational structure in which the Sunday School ministry of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation operates. In this chapter, a brief community analysis of Roslindale (the location of the church) was taken into consideration. Chapter Two asserts that Sunday School evangelism must have a firm biblical and theological foundation in order to achieve its evangelistic purpose. In Chapter Three, the author of this thesis uses insights from an array of writers on Sunday School evangelism to develop the concept of an evangelistic Sunday School. In Chapter Four the author describes the project designed to promote an evangelistic Sunday School ministry at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. Lastly, Chapter Five evaluates the effectiveness of the author's plan to make Tabernacle Baptist Congregation's Sunday School more evangelistic and suggests ways for further develop an outreach mindset in the Sunday School ministry through regular training of the teachers.



The author believes that if Sunday School teachers emphasize the "Great Commission," the classes will follow. The Sunday School teacher has the opportunity and responsibility to lead the class to Christ and to promote both in-reach and outreach ministry. Ultimately the transformation of lives is the best measure of effectiveness in evaluating the training sessions in Sunday School evangelism. The teachers' devotion to excellence, their creativity, and their passion for teaching the Word of God have all inspired and transformed the lives of class members during the implementation of the author's plan. Truly, some of the teachers represent the best that Tabernacle Baptist Congregation has to offer in terms of commitment to teaching the Word of God and to being more open to fresh ideas like Sunday School evangelism. While other teachers need more exposure on the concept of Sunday School evangelism. The implementation and effect of this new initiative has yet to be evaluated on a regular basis. However, by the grace of God, the efforts of this project have brought some spiritual fruit during its implementation in 2009-2010. The number of born again Christians and the lives that had been transformed during the unfolding of this project are in part a result of the author's training sessions. Like the early followers of Christ, let the Sunday School teachers and the outreach leaders at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation share the divine mandate of the "Great Commission" with commitment and boldness.



## APPENDIX A

### PRE-THESIS PROJECT SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

The following Sunday School Teacher's Survey took place in June 21, 2009.

Please take few minutes to answer the following questions. Your candor is appreciated.

1. What is the goal of your class for the new academic year?

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2. What was being accomplished in your class from September 2008 to June 2009?

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3. How many minutes do you teach on average?

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4. Do you have a personal relationship with the students in your class?

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5. Do you pray for the students of your class? If not, why?

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6. Do you pray for the lost? If not, why?

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7. Rank according to importance 5 things you want to accomplish in your class.

GREATER BOSTON HAITIAN CHURCH SURVEY

8. Have you contacted Sunday School visitors? If so, how do you contact them?

of those churches have an average 90 people at their worship services. The

9. Do you try to reach out to people outside the class? If so, how do you contact them?

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10. Have you experienced any one becoming born again Christian(s) in your class during 2008-2009?

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One of the Sunday School teachers reported anyone becoming born again Christians in

11. What do you see as the strengths of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation Sunday School ministry?

First Name	Last Name	Average	Average	Average	% of

12. What do you see as its weaknesses?

the Church	Southern	2	600	340	56%
the Missionary	Southern	2	600	340	56%

12. What do you see as its weaknesses?

## APPENDIX B

### GREATER BOSTON HAITIAN CHURCH SURVEY

From June to September 2010, a series of interviews and surveys was conducted in many Haitian churches in the communities surrounding Tabernacle Baptist Congregation in the Greater Boston area.

Most of those churches have on average 500 people in their worship services. The percentage of people attending Sunday School is alarmingly low in some of them, yet encouraging in others. The concept of Sunday School evangelism seems to be lacking in almost all of them. Training Sunday School leaders to promote Sunday School outreach did not seem to be their priority.

The average duration of a Sunday School class is one hour. There were only two Sunday School leaders who reported that some of their Sunday School teachers prayed for the lost and contacted class members who stopped attending Sunday School. One Sunday School leader reported that one class did home visitation and made phone contacts to those who had visited the Sunday School class.

None of the Sunday School leaders reported anyone becoming born again Christians in their classes during the survey. Study of the Word of God was the item that they ranked as first in their list of priorities. Sunday School outreach seemed to play a less important role in what was being accomplished in their classroom.

Church Name	Denomination	Average Duration of Sunday Service (hours)	Average Number of Worshipers	Average Number of those Enrolled in SS	% of Worshipers Attending Sunday School
First Haitian Baptist Church	Southern Baptist	2	800	500	62%
Boston Missionary Baptist Church	Southern Baptist	2	600	350	58%
Bethlehem Haitian Baptist Church	Southern Baptist	1½	150	55	33%
Eglise De Dieu de Boston	Pentecostal	2½	450	250	57%
Pentecostal Church of the Last Hour	Pentecostal	2½	200	50	25%
New Jerusalem Evangelical Baptist Church	Southern Baptist	2	370	230	62%



Tabernacle Lumiere	Pentecostal	1½	100	35	33%
Bethesda Baptist Church	Baptist	2½	140	50	35%
Tabernacle Baptist Congregation	Baptist	2	750	530	70%

A large number of people who attend the Sunday services are not members of the churches. Based on the above survey, the average of Sunday School enrollment represents approximately 46% of regular attenders. Therefore, there is an open door for the promotion of an evangelistic Sunday School among the Haitian churches around the Greater Boston area.

2. List your accomplishments during the academic year 2009-2010.

3. Which one of the following apply to your class?

- ☐ I invite visitors to return by visiting them or contacting them by phone.
- ☐ I encourage class members to invite the lost to come to Sunday School.
- ☐ I promote fellowship outside of the class.

4. Please rank according to their importance the following items.

(1 being the most important and 4 the least important)

- ☐ I pray for the lost on a regular basis
- ☐ I encourage the study of the Word of God
- ☐ I reach out to those who do not come to Sunday School
- ☐ I develop a friendly relationship with the class members

5. Do you pray for the students of your class? If no, why not?

6. Do you have a personal relationship with the students of your class?

## APPENDIX C

### POST-THESIS PROJECT SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

The following Sunday School Teacher's Survey was given on September 12, 2010.

Please take few minutes to answer the following questions. Your candor is appreciated.

1. What was your goal for the academic year 2009-2010?

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2. List your accomplishments during the academic year 2009-2010.

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3. Which one of the following apply to your class?

- ☐ I invite visitors to return by visiting them or contacting them by phone.  
☐ I encourage class members to invite the lost to come to Sunday School  
☐ I promote fellowship outside of the class.

4. Please rank according to their importance the following items.

(1 being the most important and 4 the least important)

- ☐ I pray for the lost on a regular basis  
☐ I encourage the study of the Word of God  
☐ I reach out to those who do not come to Sunday School  
☐ I develop a friendly relationship with the class members

5. Do you pray for the students of your class? If no, why not?

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6. Do you have a personal relationship with the students of your class?

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7. Rank according to importance 5 things you want to accomplish in your class?

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8. Have you contacted the Sunday School visitors? If yes, how do you contact them?

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9. Have you experienced any born-again Christians in your class during 2009-2010?

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10. What do you see as weaknesses of TBC Sunday School ministry?

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11. What do you see as strengths of TBC Sunday School ministry?

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12. Can you remember contacting anyone who had visited your class directly through a phone contact or home visit?

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13. Did you reach out to those who have stopped attending your class? If yes, how did you reach out to them? If no, why not?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Survey of Responses to the Post-Thesis Project Sunday School Teachers' Questionnaire

Below is an overview of responses to the post-thesis questionnaire (September 12, 2010):

*Which one of the following applies to your class: A) I invite visitors to return by visiting them or contact them by phone. B) I encourage class members to invite the lost to come to Sunday School. C) I promote fellowship outside the class*

- Four teachers answered all of the above.
- Eight teachers applied two of the above.
- Twelve teachers checked mark one of the above.
- The remaining teachers checked none of the above.

*Rank according to their importance the following items: A) I pray for the lost on a regular basis. B) I encourage the study of the Word of God. C) I reach out to those who do not come to Sunday School. D) I develop a friendly relationship with the class members.*

- Most of the teachers ranked the study of the Word of God in first place.
- Four teachers ranked the study of the Word of God in second place.
- Ten teachers classified praying for the lost in first place.
- Six teachers considered praying for the lost as the second most important.
- Three teachers ranked praying for the lost as the third most important.
- One teacher ranked praying for the lost in fourth place.
- The rest of the teachers had no comments.

*List your accomplishments during the 2009-2010 academic year.*

- Most of them ranked the study of the Word of God as their main accomplishment.
- One teacher listed having students spend more time alone with God in devotions as the main accomplishment.
- One teacher viewed encouraging students to keep in touch with each other as an accomplishment.
- For the academic year 2009-2010 none of them mentioned home visitation as a priority.

*Rank according to importance five items you want to accomplish in your class.*

- The majority ranked teaching the Word of God as the most important.
- Few of them viewed phone contact as a necessity.
- Some of them listed Sunday School outreach as important. Overall they placed it at the bottom
- Fellowship activities outside the class ranked second or third in importance among the Children's Department and the Youth Department
- Fellowship activities outside the class was classified in fifth place overall in the Adult Department



*Can you remember contacting anyone who had visited your class directly through a phone contact or home visit?*

- A pool of fifteen teachers answered “no” to this question.
- Nine teachers answered “yes” to this question. Four of them gave the name of the people they contacted.
- Three teachers did not respond.

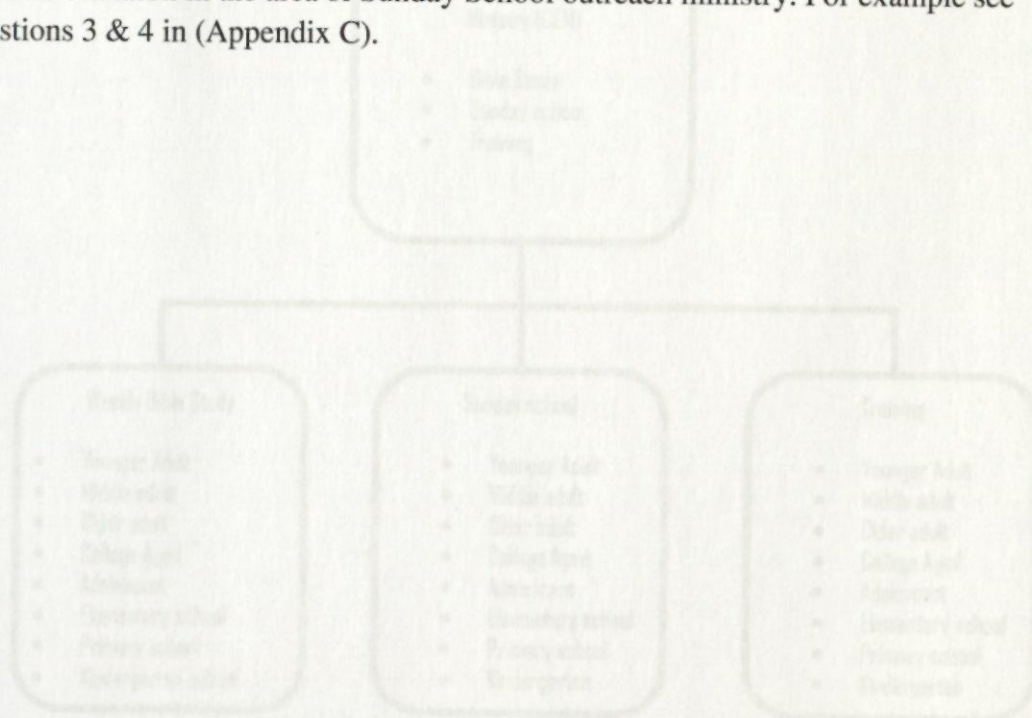
*Did you reach out to those who have stopped attending Sunday School? If yes is the answer how did you reach out to them. If no is the answer why not?*

- Fifteen teachers contacted students via phone calls.
- One teacher said that he had not experienced this problem.
- Three teachers said they did not contact the students overall.
- Three teachers mentioned that they contacted them during other church activities.
- Three teachers pointed out that they contacted the students by phone or personal visit.
- Two teachers did not respond.

Based on the analysis and the comparison of the teacher’s responses, teaching the Word of God has remained in the first place in terms of the teachers’ priorities. For the most part, fellowship was ranked second in most of the children and youth classes. Sunday School outreach was ranked in the fourth or fifth place over all.

There were similarities and differences between the responses to the pre-thesis questionnaire and the responses to the post-thesis questionnaire.

It became apparent that the post-thesis questionnaire needed to be improved to provide more information in the area of Sunday School outreach ministry. For example see questions 3 & 4 in (Appendix C).



## APPENDIX D

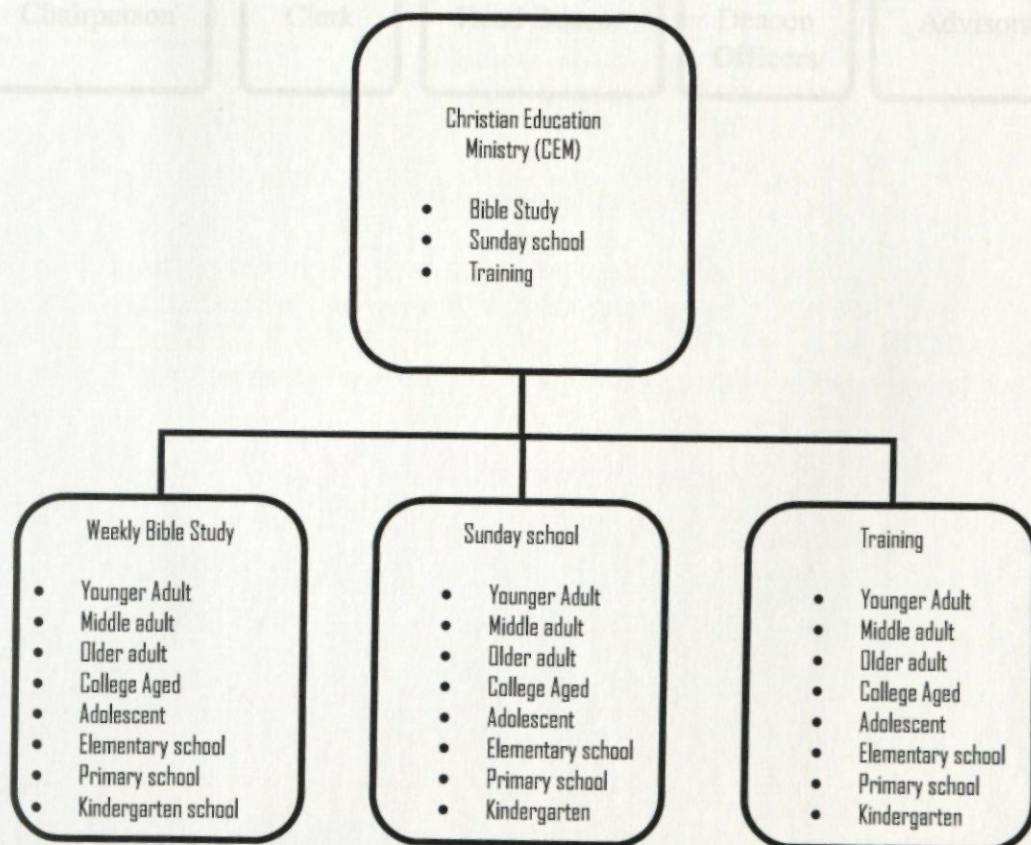
### ORGANIZATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY AT TABERNACLE BAPTIST CONGREGATION

The organizational chart below reflects the new structure of the Christian Education Ministry at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation as of 2009. The proposal to reshape Christian education had been presented to the Board of Elders by the associate pastor who is in charge of the Christian education ministry of the church.

This new structure was approved by the Board of Elders. The implementation of this new organizational structure took place in September 2010. The new board of the Christian Education Ministry will do the following in the next six months:

- Evaluate the organizational structure
- Evaluate the educational program
- Evaluate the attendance records and outreach
- Evaluate the personnel and the training programs

See below the flow chart proposed by the associate pastor

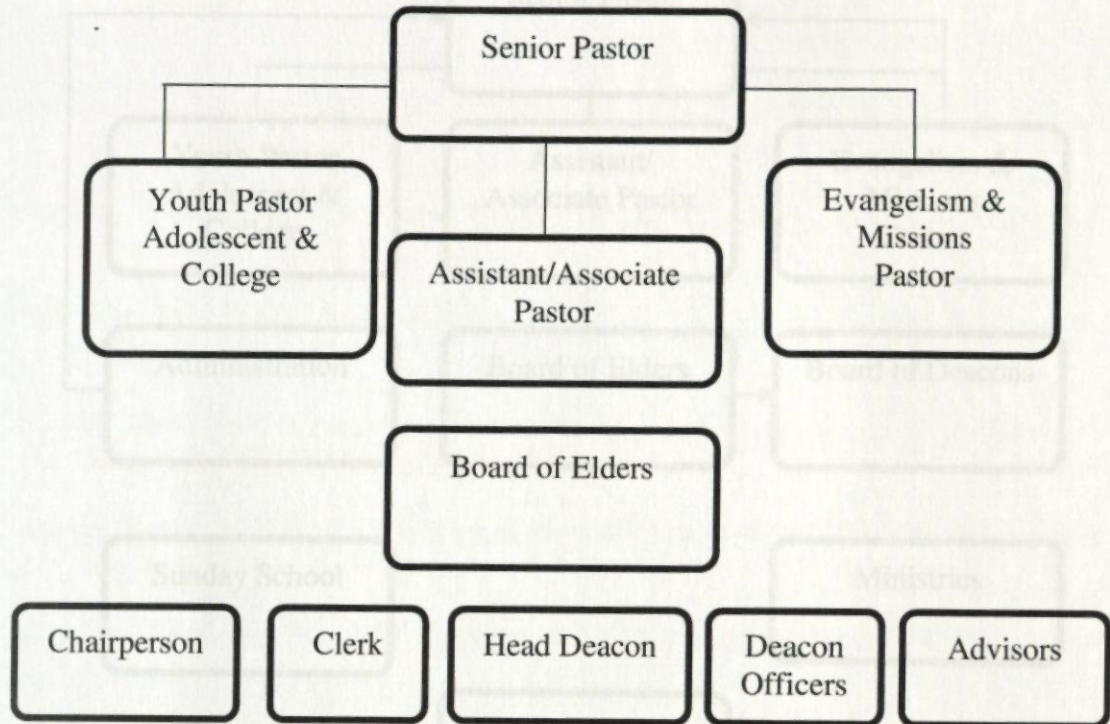




## APPENDIX E

### TABERNACLE BAPTIST CONGREGATION

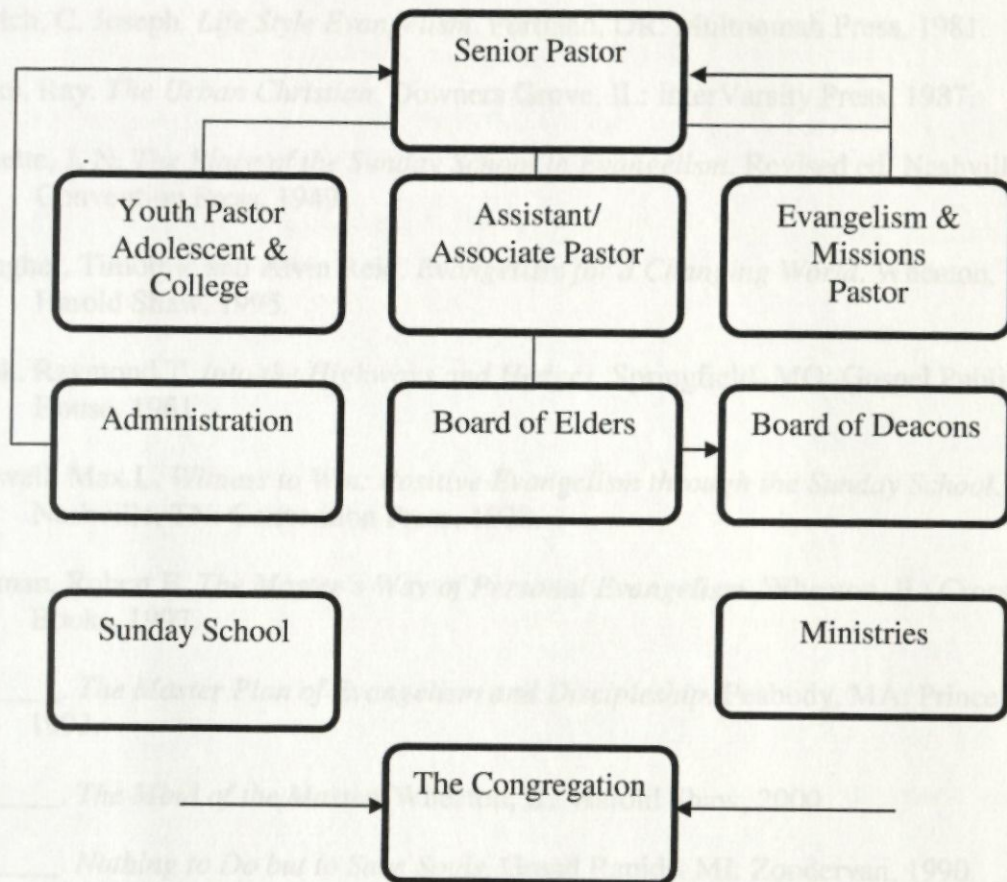
#### ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW CHART



The above flowchart reflects the structure of the church after the official inauguration of "Evangelism and Missions" pastor in May 2010. As previously stated in Chapter One, he joined the church in 2008. Now he is officially in charge of Evangelism and Missions. The author of this thesis serves on the Board of Elders and on the new Board of Sunday School.

## APPENDIX F

### TABERNACLE BAPTIST CONGREGATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW CHART (REVISED)



The above flowchart reflects the structure of the church after the official inauguration of “Evangelism and Missions” pastor in May 2010. As previously stated in Chapter One, he joined the church in 2006. Now he is officially in charge of Evangelism and Missions. The author of this thesis serves on the Board of Elders and on the new Board of Sunday School.



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three grandchildren. Matthew serves as Director of the new "Discipleship Ministry" of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. He is also on the board of Christian education and serves as the church Advisor. Matthew completed a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting at Northeastern University in Boston. He also received both a Master of Arts in Christian Education and a Master of Divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. In June 2009, Matthew returned to Gordon-Conwell to begin the Outreach and Discipleship track of seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program, and he is expected to graduate in May 2011.



## VITA

Mathieu J. Estime was born July 10, 1944 in Petionville, Haiti. He grew up in Port-Au-Prince. He moved to the United States in August 1979. He now resides with his wife, Marie M. Estime, in Foxboro, Massachusetts. He has two married children and three grandchildren. Mathieu serves as Director of the new "Discipleship Ministry" at Tabernacle Baptist Congregation. He is also on the board of Christian education and serves as the church Advisor. Mathieu completed a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting at Northeastern University in Boston. He also received both a Master of Arts in Christian Education and a Master of Divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. In June 2007, Mathieu returned to Gordon-Conwell to begin the Outreach and Discipleship track of seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program, and he is expected to graduate in May 2011.